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STYLE AND JUDGMENT IN JANE AUSTEN'S NOVELS

FRANK W. BRADBROOK

1

JANE AUSTEN is generally recognized as the supreme artist among novelists, the perfect exponent of economy of means in achieving a desired intention. That these intentions themselves were much more subtle and complex than the surface unpretentiousness of her work suggests, is also now usually agreed. From the point of view of technique it is known that the mature novels are the result of a prolonged process of revision, pruning, and re-casting. From the point of view of subject-matter (in so far as it is legitimate to make a distinction between this and the style) it is apparent that she made thorough use of every scrap of material provided by the world in which she lived. Style is the first word that comes to mind after a reading of the novels, but this has more often been mentioned than discussed or analysed.

The distinctive quality of the mature novels is epitomized, on its simplest level, by Anne Elliot's gift of translating at sight the 'inverted, transposed, curtailed' lines of an Italian song, into 'clear, comprehensible, elegant English'. In the earlier novels one is equally made aware of the negative virtues of the writing. Marianne, whatever her faults of sensibility, has many virtues of character, and one means by which this is brought home to the reader is by her revulsion from crudity of expression:

I abhor every common-place phrase by which wit is intended; and 'setting one's cap at a man', or 'making a conquest' are the most odious of all . . . If their construction could ever be deemed clever, time has long ago destroyed all its ingenuity.¹

On the other hand, the novels are full of clichés and proverbs. They are, in the majority of cases, used by the wrong sort of people, and are a sign of stupidity or deceit. Yet we are certainly not meant to disapprove when Elizabeth Bennet tells Darcy to keep his breath to cool his porridge, nor when Admiral Croft remarks that Sir Walter Elliott will never set the Thames on fire. Here the common proverbial expression makes for vigour and incisiveness. It is when worn and hackneyed language leads to insincerity, of which the person speaking is not conscious, that the phrase is implicitly or

¹ *Sense and Sensibility*, p. 45. (The references are to R. W. CHAPMAN'S edition.)

directly criticized. So Mrs. Gardiner rebukes Elizabeth for describing Bingley as being violently in love:

That expression of 'violently in love' is so hackneyed, so doubtful, so indefinite, that it gives me very little idea. It is as often applied to feelings which arise from a half-hour's acquaintance, as to a real, strong attachment.¹

Elizabeth can escape from the judgment which would naturally follow such a lapse, only because her conversation is, generally speaking, free from this kind of expression. She is, in fact, the first person to detect it in others. It is she who points out the coarseness and vulgarity of Lydia's description of Mary King — 'a nasty little freckled thing':

Elizabeth was shocked to think that, however incapable of such coarseness of *expression* herself, the coarseness of the *sentiment* was little other than her own breast had formerly harboured and fancied liberal.²

Coarseness of expression in Jane Austen leads inevitably to breaches of conduct. Insipidity is, however, almost as great a sin as impropriety, and so Lady Bertram 'formed for herself a very creditable, common-place style, so that a very little matter was enough for her'.³

Jane Austen enjoyed charades, enigmas, and conundrums. This habit encouraged word-play, and even in the novels we find an occasional pun. Again she reserves them mainly for the characters of whom she disapproves. Only a person as ill-bred as Mr Palmer could say to his wife: 'Don't palm all your abuses of language upon me.' And it is hardly a point in Mary Crawford's favour that, when speaking of the navy, she should remark: 'Of *Rears* and *Vices*, I saw enough. Now do not suspect me of a pun, I entreat.' The pun is hardly consistent with the ideal of 'clear, comprehensible, elegant English'. Like the proverb, and the occasional use of slang, it encourages a racy directness and incisiveness. Mary Crawford's dismissal of Mrs Rushworth — 'To use a vulgar phrase, she has got her penny-worth for her penny' — might well have been written by an Elizabethan, or used by a character in *Pilgrim's Progress*. It is of the same quality as Elizabeth Bennet's: 'I expected at least three pigs were got into the garden, and here is nothing but Lady Catherine and her daughter.' It is because Jane Austen includes this homely colloquial style in her armoury, and makes use of it with effortless and natural ease, that the low scenes in *Mansfield Park* are so much more successful than the Branghtons in *Evelina*. We are shocked,

¹ *Pride and Prejudice*, pp. 140-1.

² *Ibid.*, p. 220.

³ *Mansfield Park*, p. 425.

but hardly surprised, when Mr Price says: 'Stop your confounded pipe!' Directness and brevity find their appropriate consummation in the epigram, and here Jane Austen reminds us of La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, and their English imitators, Lord Halifax, Swift, and Lord Chesterfield, as much as of Dr Johnson. Comments such as: 'A large income is the best receipt for happiness, I ever heard of', 'We all love to instruct, though we can teach only what is not worth knowing', 'Selfishness must always be forgiven you know, because there is no hope of a cure', abound. A character such as Mr Bennet is a personification of this trait: the apparent cynicism of his reflections, and the characteristic irony with which they are expressed, corresponded to a permanent attitude in Jane Austen herself when confronted by human folly and vice.

The convention of the novel-in-letters, common in the eighteenth century, was rejected by Jane Austen in her mature work. But the importance of the letters in the novels is none the less great. They serve something of the same function as the soliloquy in drama. At a crisis in the story, or just before the denouement, the dramatic situation is frequently resolved by this means.¹ And here, again, style reveals character. Lydia Bennet's letters to Kitty were much too full of lines under the words to be made public, and on the letters of Mr Collins' comment is scarcely necessary. The difference in manner of writing between the sexes is discussed in *Northanger Abbey*, and Henry Tilney suggests one explanation of the ease with which Jane Austen herself wrote:

'Not keep a journal! How are your absent cousins to understand the tenor of your life in Bath without one? How are the civilities and compliments of every day to be related as they ought to be, unless noted down every evening in a journal? How are your various dresses to be remembered, and the particular state of your complexion and curl of your hair to be described, in all their diversities, without having constant recourse to a journal? — My dear madam, I am not so ignorant of young ladies' ways as you wish to believe me. It is this delightful habit of journalizing which largely contributes to form the easy style of writing for which ladies are so generally celebrated. Everybody allows that the talent of writing agreeable letters is peculiarly female. Nature may have done something, but I am sure it must be essentially assisted by the practice of keeping a journal.'

'I have sometimes thought,' said Catherine, doubtfully, 'whether ladies do write so much better letters than gentlemen.'

¹ Between lovers correspondence was considered improper without a positive engagement. Hence, the misunderstandings that occur in *Sense and Sensibility*.

That is — I should not think the superiority was always on our side.'

'As far as I have had opportunity of judging, it appears to me that the usual style of letter-writing among women is faultless, except in three particulars.'

'And what are they?'

'A general deficiency of subject, a total inattention to stops, and a very frequent ignorance of grammar.'¹

The feminine point of view is given, in their different ways, by Mary Crawford and Fanny Price. Mary Crawford, speaking of the letters of Edmund and Tom, says:

What strange creatures brothers are! You would not write to each other but upon the most urgent necessity in the world; and when obliged to take up the pen to say that such a horse is ill, or such a relation dead, it is done in the fewest possible words. You have but one style among you. I know it perfectly. Henry, who is in every other respect exactly what a brother should be, who loves me, consults me, confides in me, and will talk to me by the hour together, has never yet turned the page in a letter; and very often it is nothing more than, 'Dear Mary, I am just arrived. Bath seems full, and every thing as usual. Your's sincerely.' That is the true manly style; that is a complete brother's letter.²

Later, speaking to Edmund, Fanny Price, very much in the tone of Jane Austen herself, replies to the charge:

I cannot rate so very highly the love or good nature of a brother, who will not give himself the trouble of writing any thing worth reading, to his sisters, when they are separated.³

The general attitude towards the subject of letters is, of course, less solemn than this. Jane Austen's own opinion lies somewhere in between the opinions expressed by these two opposing characters. The final comment in *Mansfield Park* on the comparative abilities of the sexes, is made in connection with Lady Bertram:

Every body at all addicted to letter writing, without having much to say, which will include a large proportion of the female world at least. . . .⁴

In *Emma* the theme is ironically dismissed by Mr John Knightly in his conversation with Jane Fairfax:

¹ *Northanger Abbey*, p. 27.

² *Ibid.*, p. 64.

³ *Mansfield Park*, p. 59.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 425.

'The post-office has a great charm at one period of our lives. When you have lived to my age, you will begin to think letters are never worth going through the rain for.'

There was a little blush, and then this answer:

'I must not hope to be ever situated as you are, in the midst of every dearest connection, and therefore I cannot expect that simply growing older should make me indifferent about letters.'

'Indifferent! Oh no — I never conceived you could become indifferent; they are generally a very positive curse.'

'You are speaking of letters of business; mine are letters of friendship.'

'I have often thought them the worse of the two,' replied he coolly. 'Business, you know, may bring money, but friendship hardly ever does.'¹

In Frank Churchill the effeminacy and weakness of his general behaviour are confirmed by his ability to write a long, fluent letter and by the floweriness of his hand-writing. There is an immense amount of similar evidence throughout the novels to prove the importance of style in letter-writing in determining our view of a character, particularly at crucial points in the story.

Conversation provides, of course, the most important means of determining quality, whether in single characters, or among various groups of people. The discussion between Anne and Mr Elliot touches the central theme of the novels; in his belittling of the place of knowledge and information in civilized intercourse Mr Elliot is weighed in the balance and found wanting:

'My idea of good company, Mr Elliot, is the company of clever, well-informed people, who have a great deal of conversation; that is what I call good company.'

'You are mistaken,' said he gently, 'that is not good company, that is the best. Good company requires only birth, education and manners, and with regard to education is not very nice. Birth and good manners are essential; but a little learning is by no means a dangerous thing in good company, on the contrary, it will do very well.'²

Anne's greater fastidiousness implies, on the other hand, that however important social distinctions are, rank and breeding (in the narrow sense) are not all-important. She finds more congenial company in Mrs Smith and Nurse Rooke, than in her own family and their friends. 'Education' (that key-word in the novels) includes more than Mr Elliot is prepared to admit, and can exist without qualities that he regards as essential.

¹ *Emma*, p. 293.

² *Persuasion*, p. 150.

The most common test of endurance to which the heroine in Jane Austen's novels has to submit is the accepting of the world as she finds it, the strain involved in living in inferior company. So Emma notes, during a party given by the Coles, typical specimens of the *nouveaux riches*:

The children came in, and were talked to and admired amid the usual rate of conversation; a few clever things said, a few downright silly, but by much the larger proportion neither the one nor the other — nothing worse than everyday remarks, dull repetitions, old news, and heavy jokes.¹

Reading the novels is largely a matter of distinguishing between the nuances and gradations of 'the usual rate of conversation' among such people. As R. W. Chapman has remarked, 'We feel how far the language of educated conversation has travelled in a century.' We are also inclined to feel that *plus ça change*.

The question of speech is not so simple as might appear. It is partly used as a measuring-rod by which we can estimate degrees of intelligence, but it does not provide an absolute standard of either intelligence or integrity. Lucy Steele's want of instruction prevents her meeting Elinor on terms of equality, and the parties of the Middletons and the Dashwoods are disposed of with the brief comment that they did not produce one novelty of thought or expression. Yet the subject of conversational powers is itself touched with irony. Mrs Hurst's and Miss Bingley's powers of conversation were considerable:

They could describe an entertainment with accuracy, relate an anecdote with humour, and laugh at their acquaintance with spirit.²

To introduce intelligent conversation is a sign of good-breeding. The dangers of conversation in encouraging insincerity of thought, and slackness of language, are recognized too. Mary Crawford, herself a victim of the conversational vice, sees this:

Never is a black word. But yes, in the *never* of conversation, which means *not very often*, I do think it.³

To which Edmund Bertram gravely replies:

The *nothing* of conversation has its gradations, I hope, as well as the *never*.⁴

The dangers are underlined by Fanny Price, who derived

¹ *Emma*, p. 219.

² *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 54.

³ *Mansfield Park*, p. 92.

⁴ *Ibid.*

No higher pleasure from Mary Crawford's conversation than occasional amusement, and *that* often at the expense of her judgment, when it was raised by pleasantries on people or subjects which she wished to be respected.¹

The ideal may be said to lie neither in Mr Hurst who, when he found Elizabeth Bennet 'prefer a plain dish to a ragout, had nothing to say to her', nor in Mrs Jennings who was an everlasting talker with no conversation. (Lady Middleton is more agreeable than her mother only in being more silent.) Glibness and facility are distrusted, particularly in men. Willoughby had 'a propensity of saying too much what he thought on every occasion, without attention to persons or circumstances'.² Wickham had a happy readiness of conversation — a readiness at the same time perfectly correct and unassuming — that helped to create a favourable but false first impression. Henry Crawford, Frank Churchill, and Mr Elliot are also great talkers. On the other hand, Mr Darcy never speaks much unless among his intimate acquaintance, though he is indignant at an evening being passed in singing and dancing to the exclusion of all conversation. Mr Knightley professes that he cannot make long speeches. This is, perhaps, merely a sign of his modesty. At least it is suggested that he could, if necessary, shout down Miss Bates. What all these characters (Edward Ferrars, Colonel Brandon, Edmund Bertram, Captain Wentworth too) disapprove of in conversation is the fault that Henry Tilney detects in Isabella — 'incorrectness of language'.

The importance of conversation in the novels makes them naturally dramatic. Miss C. L. Thomson suggested a long time ago that Jane Austen probably derived her first impulse to authorship from reading plays, which, however poor as literature were well constructed, full of bright talk and telling situations. While Miss M. Lascelles has noted in the conversation of Mr Bennet and Elizabeth on the pleasure of being jilted, the rhythm of stage comedy. Without allying oneself with those who deal in influences in literature, one is surely right in noting in this close relationship between the novelist (particularly the writer of satirical comedy) and the drama, a characteristic which is continuous in English fiction, which both links Jane Austen with her predecessors, and connects her with a modern novelist such as Mr E. M. Forster.

There is one of these typically dramatic scenes which has been dealt with in an almost identical manner by Fielding, Jane Austen, and George Eliot. It is a kind of 'set-piece' in English fiction — the moment when two ladies who are enemies meet to discuss the gentleman concerned. It is, inevitably, a theatrical moment, and it is

¹ *Mansfield Park*, p. 208.

² *Sense and Sensibility*, pp. 48-9.

interesting that the three novelists, writing at widely separated intervals of time, should have adopted a very similar method.

The example in Fielding occurs in *Joseph Andrews* where Lady Booby and Pamela are discussing the former's nephew:

Lady Booby said, applying to her niece, that she wondered her nephew, who had pretended to marry for love, should think such a subject proper to amuse his wife with; adding that, for her part, she should be jealous of a husband who spoke so warmly in praise of another woman. Pamela answered, indeed, she thought she had cause; but it was an instance of Mr Booby's aptness to see more beauty in women than they were mistresses of. At which words both the women fixed their eyes on two looking-glasses; and Lady Booby replied, that men were in the general, very ill judges of beauty; and then, whilst both contemplated only their own faces, they paid a cross compliment to each other's charms.

Fielding, of course, like so many novelists in the eighteenth century, was also a dramatist. And in such a description as this there is the dramatist's instinctive appreciation of an effective scene. But the tone, accent, and manner of the writing are also familiar. They bring to mind, in particular, the conversation between Elinor and Lucy Steele in *Sense and Sensibility*. The setting is of a similar dramatic type:

'Perhaps,' continued Elinor, 'if I should happen to cut out, I may be of some use to Miss Lucy Steele, in rolling her papers for her; and there is so much still to be done in the basket, that it must be impossible I think for her labour singly, to finish it this evening. I should like the work exceedingly, if she would allow me a share in it.'

'Indeed, I shall be very much obliged to you for your help,' cried Lucy, 'for I find there is more to be done to it than I thought there was; and it would be a shocking thing to disappoint dear Annamaria after all.'

... Lucy made room for her with ready attention, and the two fair rivals were thus seated side by side at the same table, and with the utmost harmony engaged in forwarding the same work.¹

A comparable moment occurs in *Middlemarch* Book III, Chapter XXXI, where Mrs. Bulstrode calls to inquire about the seriousness of Rosamond Vincy's relationship with Lydgate:

'You are alone, I see, my dear,' she said, as they entered the drawing-room together, looking round gravely. Rosamond felt

¹ *Sense and Sensibility*, p. 145.

sure that her aunt had something particular to say, and they sat down near each other. Nevertheless, the quilling inside Rosamond's bonnet was so charming that it was impossible not to desire the same kind of thing for Kate, and Mrs Bulstrode's eyes, which were rather fine, rolled round that ample quilled circuit, while she spoke.

'I have just heard something about you that has surprised me very much, Rosamond.'

'What is that, aunt?' Rosamond's eyes also were roaming over her aunt's large embroidered collar.

'I can hardly believe it — that you should be engaged without my knowing it — without your father's telling me.' Here Mrs Bulstrode's eyes finally rested on Rosamond's, who blushed deeply, and said —

'I am not engaged, aunt.'

'How is it that every one says so, then — that it is the town's talk?'

'The town's talk is of very little consequence, I think,' said Rosamond, inwardly gratified.

Pamela, Lucy Steele, and Rosamond Vincy resemble each other in a certain snakiness. They belong to a type of character which the female novelist naturally excels in depicting. One notes how much more effective the scene is, as rendered by Jane Austen and George Eliot. Being put in terms of dialogue instead of reported speech, the accent is more vividly presented, more directly caught. The tension of the moment is, however, similarly heightened in each of the examples of feminine swordsmanship. The concentration on minor points of detail — the two looking-glasses in Fielding, the rolling of the papers and little Annamaria in *Sense and Sensibility*, the quilling of Rosamond's bonnet, and Mrs Bulstrode's large embroidered collar — suggests the emotional conflict underneath the calm surface of the conversation as effectively as if the characters were acting (as in a sense they are) on a stage. We follow the movement of their eyes. In Fielding and Jane Austen the enemies are on terms of equality, and their glances never meet — 'whilst both contemplated their own faces, they paid a cross compliment to each other's charms' and 'the two fair rivals were thus seated side by side at the same table, and with the utmost harmony engaged in forwarding the same work'. In George Eliot, Mrs Bulstrode is in a position of some authority over Rosamond, and so her eyes ('which were rather fine') can, after the necessary preliminaries, finally come to rest on Rosamond's, who blushes.

Scenes of this nature are frequent in the novels of Henry James. Novels of satirical comedy, implying a civilized standard of personal

relationships, tend to be dramatic in this manner. The quality and tone of such writing constitutes the great strength, not only of Jane Austen's novels, but of much of the finer part of English fiction as a whole. In replacing the drama, the novel absorbed some of its finer qualities, in the realm of comedy, at least.

2

Style in Jane Austen is a means of registering judgment. Yet style and subject-matter have often been considered separately by her critics. Professor S. Alexander argued that the style fits the subject, but that the subject itself is not (except perhaps in *Persuasion*) a great one.¹ A. B. Walkeley maintained that 'The Russians have made the novel a vehicle for thought and passion and tragedy of which she never dreamed. She will survive, but chiefly as "a peaceful retreat!"'² Professor H. W. Garrod has reduced the main dramatis personæ of the novels to such types as 'The Tame Girl', 'The Spirited Girl', 'The Elderly Eligible', and 'The Muff'.³ Among novelists, Charlotte Brontë at some length, and D. H. Lawrence in a brief aside, have expressed utter antipathy.

Janeites are themselves partly responsible if such adverse criticism appears even more damaging than it is. The person and the novels have been surrounded with an odour of sanctity of which Jane Austen — 'the most unlearned and uninformed female who ever dared to be an authoress' — would have been the first to disapprove. Jane's own sweetness of temper, the subtlety, delicacy, polish, and refinement of her work, are sufficiently obvious, however difficult to analyse. But they would not be so impressive if they were not supported by other qualities of mind than many of her admirers are prepared to recognize, an element of character that relates her, whatever the difference in the intellectual range of their interests, to George Eliot. Like George Eliot, and unlike Charlotte Yonge and Virginia Woolf (to take two very different examples), she can hardly qualify, in the narrow sense, as a lady.⁴ To be a lady when she lived did not involve the same limitations. It was this fact, made apparent by the publication in full of the letters in 1932 by R. W. Chapman, that so jarred on the sensibilities of Mr E. M. Forster.⁵ And in the novels themselves there is a similar kind of ruthless strength. The reader of Fielding and Sterne appears also to have read Swift, however much she may have been repelled by him:

¹ *The Art of Jane Austen* (Manchester University Press and Longmans.)

² Lecture on Jane Austen before the Royal Society of Literature (reprinted in *Nineteenth Century*, April 1922.)

³ *Jane Austen: A Depreciation in Essays by Diver Hands*, Vol. VIII.

⁴ For the latest evidence see the letter in *The Cornhill*, No. 973.

⁵ See *Abinger Harvest*, p. 152.

If the judgment of a Yahoo can ever be depended on, I suppose it may now, for I believe Mr. Evelyn has all his life thought more of horses than of anything else.¹

There is the same explosion of repulsion behind the satire on sporting types in the novels. Jane Austen, so far from providing 'a peaceful retreat', can be as disturbing and destructive of complacency as Swift. The quality of her irony is equally discomfiting, though her powers are not solely directed towards destruction.

The tension which lies at the heart of the novels is caused by the conflict between these negative impulses, and the flow of her sympathies towards the people, the things, and the actions of which she approves. The world which she creates is made complex by her insight into the mixed motives of all her creatures, by the very range and breadth of her sympathies. 'I do not know whether it ought to be so, but certainly silly things do cease to be silly if they are done by sensible people in an impudent way. Wickedness is always wickedness, but folly is not always folly. It depends upon the character of those who handle it.'²

The extent to which writers such as Jane Austen and George Eliot can be accurately described as moralists is debatable. In their analysis of conduct, manners, and personal relationships in provincial society, they certainly bring moral standards to bear. However tinged with amusement it may be, Anne Elliot's recommendation to Captain Benwick has the writer's sympathy:

Such works of our best moralists, such collections of the finest letters, such memoirs of characters of worth and suffering, as occurred to her at the moment as calculated to rouse and fortify the mind by the highest precepts, and the strongest examples of moral and religious endurances.³

But to separate the moralist from the artist is difficult, or, rather, impossible: if they could be separated the novels would hardly be successful. In the case of Jane Austen, however, this side does seem to be in need of some stress. The moral weight behind George Eliot's novels is obvious or even obtrusive. Beside them some readers would consider *Emma* and *Persuasion* comparatively lightweight work, entertaining, but hardly to be taken seriously, lacking in thought, passion and tragedy.

It is often assumed that because Jane Austen rates the social virtues highly she knows no others. She certainly values such qualities as good taste, good-breeding, decorum, prudence, civility, manners, and consideration for others. But she has no time for the irritable refinement of a Marianne Dashwood and 'the too great

¹ *Letters*. Vol. I, p. 70 (Chapman's ed.)

² *Emma*, p. 212.

³ *Persuasion*, p. 101.

importance placed by her on the delicacies of a strong sensibility and the graces of a polished manner.¹ She prefers Elinor's fortitude. Lack of breeding in Mrs Jennings is redeemed by her good nature. Whereas Lady Middleton and Mrs John Dashwood who have 'an insipid propriety of demeanour and a general want of understanding'² are exposed in all their cold-hearted selfishness. To be elegant and genteel is not enough to gain heaven in Jane Austen's world. 'Sense', as Elinor remarks, 'is the foundation on which every thing good may be built,' but sense again, is not, by itself, enough.

On the question of personal relationships Jane Austen seems to look back, beyond the *Spectator*, the accepted model for manners and morals in eighteenth-century polite literature, to the more aristocratic ideal of conduct contained in Lord Halifax's *Advice to a Daughter* (still late on in the century one of the most popular conduct books for young ladies of the middle class.) The sections on religion, wit, how to treat a husband, house, family, and children, behaviour and conversation, friendship, censure, vanity and affectation, diversions, and the rest, are all relevant. On pride, for example, Lord Halifax has this to say:

One kind of it is as much a virtue, as the other is a vice. To be cured by a little seasonable raillery, a little sharpness well placed, without dwelling too long upon it . . . That which is to be recommended to you, is an emulation to raise yourself to a character, by which you may be distinguished; an eagerness for precedence in virtue, and all such other things as may gain you a greater share of the good opinion of the world . . . The pride which leadeth to a good end, cannot be a vice, since it is the beginning of a virtue; and to be pleased with just applause, is so far from a fault, that it would be an ill-symptom in a woman who should not place the greatest part of her satisfaction in it. Humility is no doubt a great virtue; but it ceaseth to be so, when it is afraid to scorn an ill thing. Against vice and folly it is becoming your sex to be haughty; but you must not carry the contempt of things to arrogance towards persons, and it must be done with fitting distinctions, else it may be inconvenient by being unseasonable. A pride that raiseth a little anger to be out-done in any thing that is good, will have so good an effect, that it is very hard to allow it to a fault.

It is no easie matter to carry even between these differing kinds so described; but remember that it is safer for a woman to be thought too proud, than too familiar.³

¹ *Sense and Sensibility*, p. 201.

² *Ibid.*, p. 229.

³ *The complete works of George Savile*, ed. WALTER RALEIGH, pp. 43-4.

Pride was certainly even more important in men, as the *Letters to his Son* of Lord Chesterfield (which Jane Austen knew) prove. Allowing for this, Lord Halifax's remarks are in line with Charlotte Lucas's defence of Darcy:

'His pride,' said Miss Lucas, 'does not offend *me* so much as pride often does, because there is an excuse for it. One cannot wonder that so very fine a young man, with family, fortune, every thing in his favour, should think highly of himself. If I may so express it, he has a right to be proud.'

'That is very true,' replied Elizabeth, 'and I could easily forgive *his* pride, if he had not mortified *mine*.'

Though we take it with a pinch of salt, we do not completely reject Darcy's defence of himself:

Vanity is a weakness indeed. But pride — where there is a real superiority of mind, pride will be always under good regulation.²

Darcy's comment on humility closely resembles the sentiment of Lord Halifax, and is meant to be accepted — it has the true Johnsonian ring!

Nothing is more deceitful than the appearance of humility. It is often only carelessness of opinion, and sometimes an indirect boast.³

Such a person as Frank Churchill has too little pride:

Of pride, indeed, there was, perhaps, scarcely enough; his indifference to a confusion of rank bordered too much on inelegance of mind.⁴

As a contrast, Anne Elliot wished that her father and sister had more real pride, and less concern with mere pride of rank. Distinctions of rank are important, but too great an awareness of them is a sign of vulgarity: to ignore them completely is as wrong as to be concerned with nothing else. The fact that Mr Elliot married a person whose father was a grazier and whose grandfather had been a butcher is not condemned in itself, but because it is a sin against the family — 'all the honour of the family he held as cheap as dirt.' Anne herself is proud: 'I certainly am proud, too proud to enjoy a welcome which depends so entirely upon place.' The whole theme is ironically summed up in *Emma*:

Mr Churchill has pride; but his pride is nothing to his wife's; his is a quiet, indolent, gentlemanlike sort of pride, that would

¹ *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 20.

² *Ibid.*, p. 48.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁴ *Emma*, p. 198.

harm nobody and only make himself a little helpless and tiresome; but her pride is arrogance and insolence. And what inclines one less to bear, she has no fair pretence of family or blood. She was nobody when he married her, barely the daughter of a gentleman; but ever since her being turned into a Churchill, she has out-Churchilled them all in high and mighty claims: but in herself, I assure you she is an upstart.¹

The treatment of the subject in *Pride and Prejudice* should be seen in the light of the complex attitude towards it in the other novels. Of course, Darcy's manners are shown as completely disgusting. They receive the appropriate treatment in Elizabeth's rejection of his proposal. But admitting this, her later view of him is not inconsistent. An excess of pride does not affect ultimate integrity:

She had never in the whole course of their acquaintance . . . seen any thing that betrayed him to be unprincipled or unjust — any thing that spoke him of irreligious or immoral habits.²

Another strand in the general moral pattern of the story is presented in the marriage of Charlotte Lucas. Jane Austen's attitude towards marriage has been frequently described as mercenary and cynical. There are, however, no half-measures about Elizabeth's rejection of the whole idea of a marriage of convenience as nauseating. Jane Bennet, for once, receives a reprimand:

You shall not, for the sake of one individual, change the meaning of principle and integrity, nor endeavour to persuade yourself or me, that selfishness is prudence, and insensibility of danger, security for happiness.³

It is this kind of decisiveness of moral judgment that gives strength and body to the novels, that makes them so much more than is suggested in the common formula 'a comedy of manners'. That it exists without any loss of subtlety or blurring of fine distinctions is due to the artistry with which the issues are presented. When, for instance, Lady Catherine attempts to dissuade Elizabeth from marriage, and talks of honour, decorum, prudence, interest, duty, and gratitude, we know what weight to give to these pious frauds. Jane Austen's concern with moral issues, with standards of behaviour and conduct, is off-set by her insight into moral pretentiousness, hypocrisy, sham, and the infinite capacity of human beings to deceive themselves. Mary Bennet and Mr Collins are a parody and burlesque of the kind of moral concern implied in the story. Their presence is sufficient to ensure that there is nothing Pecksniffian in the general tone: Mr Collins is only too like Pecksniff himself.

¹ *Emma*, pp. 309-10.

² *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 207.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 135-6.

In arriving at a judgment on character, two of the favourite words used in the novels are 'liberal' and 'candour'. So Marianne 'was neither reasonable nor candid. She expected from other people the same opinions and feelings as her own, and she judged of their motives by the immediate effect of their actions on herself.'¹ It is Elinor's wish, on the other hand, 'to be candid in my judgment of everybody'.² Jane Bennet personifies this ideal of candour. It is her nature 'to be candid without ostentation or design — to take the good of everybody's character and make it still better, and say nothing of the bad'.³ Again 'Jane's mild and steady candour always pleaded for allowances, and urged the possibility of mistakes'.⁴ In *Mansfield Park* it is a point in favour of Lady Bertram that she is at least more candid than Mrs Norris. Candour is what finally unites Emma and Mr Knightley despite all the complications and misunderstandings:

Seldom, very seldom, does complete truth belong to any human disclosure; seldom can it happen that something is not a little disguised, or a little mistaken; but where, as in this case, though the conduct is mistaken, the feelings are not, it may not be very material. Mr Knightley could not impute to Emma a more relenting heart than she possessed, or a heart more disposed to accept of his.⁵

By this standard of candour Frank Churchill is judged, not by the laxer one of ordinary society:

In general he was judged, throughout the parishes of Donwell and Highbury, with great candour; liberal allowances were made for the little excesses of such a handsome young man, — one who smiled so often and bowed so well; but there was one spirit among them not to be softened, from its power of censure, by bows or smiles — Mr Knightley.⁶

It is appropriately Mr Knightley who delivers the *coup de grâce*:

Always deceived, in fact, by his own wishes, and regardless of little besides his own convenience. Fancying you to have fathomed his secret! Natural enough! his own mind full of intrigue, that he should suspect it in others. Mystery — finesse — how they pervert the understanding! My Emma, does not every thing serve to prove more and more the beauty of truth and sincerity in all our dealings with each other?

¹ *Sense and Sensibility*, p. 202.

² *Pride and Prejudice*, pp. 14-5.

³ *Emma*, pp. 431-2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 445-6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

The same theme is the subject of the disagreement between Anne and Lady Russell in *Persuasion*. To Lady Russell Mr. Elliot is 'steady, observant, moderate, candid'. While to Anne he was 'rational, discreet, polished — but he was not open'. The final exposure shows that it is cunning, selfishness, and greed, the exact opposite of candour, that go to make up Mr Elliot's character.

To be 'liberal' has, in some of its uses, a similar meaning to 'candour'. Captain Harville lays claim to a virtue similar to that of Jane Bennet — 'I hope you do not think I am so illiberal as to want every man to have the same objects and pleasures as myself.' It is Mr Knightley's 'liberality' that Emma doubts in his opinion of Frank Churchill:

To take a dislike to a young man, only because he appeared to be of a different disposition from himself, was unworthy the real liberality of mind which she was always used to acknowledge in him; for with all the high opinion of himself, which she had often laid to his charge, she had never before for a moment supposed it could make him unjust to the merit of another.¹

To be 'liberal' also means to be generous to the poor, as when Mr Knightley shows his liberality by sending a sack of his finest baking apples to Miss Bates and her mother.

Emma sins against liberality in both senses in the scene at Box Hill (significantly placed immediately following the visit to Donwell). Miss Bates may be a bore,² but her conduct after Emma's insolence emphasizes the horror that Mr Knightley expresses — 'I wish you could have heard how she talked of it — with what candour and generosity.' Emma's attempt to excuse herself — 'You must allow that what is good and what is ridiculous are most unfortunately blended in her' repeats an earlier remark of Frank Churchill's — 'She is a woman that one may, that one *must* laugh at; but that one would not wish to slight.' It is her poverty and the fact that she had known Emma from her earliest years that make the mockery criminal.

That we can retain sympathy with the heroine after this brutality and cruelty is one of the greatest triumphs of Jane Austen's art. It is the climax of the process of self-deception (which is also self-betrayal) with which the novel has been concerned. Emma redeems herself by the immediate repentance (not made any easier by Miss Bates's 'dreadful gratitude') in the following chapter. Mr Knightley, the embodiment of liberality and candour, acknowledges the change:

¹ *Emma*, pp. 150-1.

² Lord David Cecil mentions this fact four times (Leslie Stephen Lecture, 1935, reprinted in *Poets and Storytellers*). He appears to ignore this scene, though he does mention once that Miss Bates 'was also a kind old spinster with an excellent heart'.

It seemed as if there were an instantaneous impression in her favour, as if his eyes received the truth from her's, and all that had passed of good in her feelings were at once caught and honoured. He looked at her with a glow of regard.¹

It is because Emma has redeemed herself so completely that there is no taint of insincerity in her disposing of Frank Churchill, whose influence was largely responsible for the behaviour at Box Hill:

None of that upright integrity, that strict adherence to truth and principle, that disdain of trick and littleness, which a man should display in every transaction of his life.²

Her indignation is modified by the thought that:

She was extremely angry with herself. If she could not have been angry with Frank Churchill, it would have been dreadful.³

As is the case with Marianne Dashwood, Catherine Morland, and Elizabeth Bennet, the scene of humiliation is the prelude to triumph. These heroines lose nothing, compared with Fanny Price and Anne Elliot, by being proved to be mistaken in their opinions and feelings.

The themes of liberality and candour are given a final ironic twist. Mr Knightley, commenting on Frank Churchill's letter, remarks: 'He is a very liberal thinker, with his thousands and tens of thousands.' In fact, he is opposed to everything understood by the adjective 'liberal', as used by Jane Austen.

3

The moral virtues implied in the novels belong to people who live in the country: the majority of the vicious characters come from London, and really belong there. The country is the natural home of liberty and quiet, and what is called in *Sense and Sensibility* 'free and luxurious solitude'. The attitude was common in eighteenth-century literature, particularly in Goldsmith and Cowper, two of Jane Austen's favourite writers. It is not accepted completely. The interest lies in the inter-play between the two different ways of living. When Miss Bingley talks of Elizabeth Bennet's 'country town indifference to decorum', we know what to think of Miss Bingley. And in the same way Mrs Elton 'thought herself coming with superior knowledge of the world, to enliven and improve a country neighbourhood'. It is a sign of bad taste in Mr Robert Ferrars that he should describe even the detestable Lucy Steele as 'the merest awkward country girl, without style, or elegance, and almost without beauty'.

A character such as Darcy moves in both worlds. He is in a

¹ *Emma*, p. 385.

² *Ibid.*, p. 397.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 402-3.

position to point out that 'in a country neighbourhood you move in a very confined and unvarying society'. At the same time, it is made clear that the fashions of London are largely responsible for his faults. Bingley, recognizing that the country and the town have each their advantages, ends, like all sensible people in Jane Austen, by marrying and settling in the country. The satirical attitude towards the Londoner is what lies behind the treatment of Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park*. One remembers her surprise at the difficulty, in the middle of a very late harvest, in hiring a horse and cart to transport her harp, and it is she who refers to 'the sturdy independence of your country customs'. Edmund Bertram, as is appropriate, points the moral:

We do not look in great cities for our best morality. It is not there that respectable people of any denomination can do most good; and it certainly is not there, that the influence of the clergy can be most felt.¹

In the country 'the parish and neighbourhood are of a size capable of knowing his private character, and observing his general conduct, which in London can rarely be the case'. The preference is not based solely on these grounds. On Fanny Price's removal to Portsmouth: 'it was sad to her to lose all the pleasures of the spring. She had not known before what pleasures she *had* to lose in passing March and April in a town.'² Life in a town means confinement and noise — 'bad air, bad smells', substituted for 'liberty, freshness, fragrance, and verdure.' Even sunshine appears a totally different thing — 'There was neither health nor gaiety in sunshine in a town.'

The contrast is strongly pointed in *Persuasion* too. Anne Eliot regretted that her father should find 'so much to be vain of in the littleness of a town,' and that Elizabeth 'who had been mistress of Kellynch Hall should find . . . extent to be proud of between two walls, perhaps thirty feet asunder'.³ It is significant that the Crofts, who replace the Elliots at Kellynch Hall, 'brought with them their country habit of being almost always together'.⁴

London has its special amusements and code of manners, as Mrs. Dashwood recognizes when she sends Elinor and Marianne there. Sir John Middleton fails to make the proper distinctions, and, despite his wife's disapproval, gives a ball:

In the country, an unpremeditated dance was very allowable; but in London, where the reputation of elegance was more important and less easily attained, it was risking too much for the gratification of a few girls, to have it known that Lady

¹ *Mansfield Park*, p. 93.

² *Persuasion*, p. 138.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 431.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

Middleton had given a small dance of eight or nine couple, with two violins, and a mere side-board collation.¹

It takes a Mrs Bennet to believe that London has no greater advantage over the country than the shops and public places. London, the home of liveliness and gallantry, is where one learns one's manners. It is its moral influence that is regretted. So Mary Crawford refers to the true London maxim, that every thing is to be got with money, and goes on to suggest that the metropolis is a pretty fair sample of the rest of the nation, to which Edmund Bertram replies: 'Not, I should hope of the proportion of virtue to vice throughout the kingdom.'² Similarly, Henry Crawford maintains that he must have a London audience if he ever becomes a clergyman — 'I could not preach but to the educated.'³ While Fanny Price, on the contrary, 'was disposed to think the influence of London very much at war with all respectable attachments. She saw the proof of it in Miss Crawford, as well as in her cousins'.⁴

The comparison and contrast between two essentially different modes of living particularly stressed in *Mansfield Park*, resembles the antithesis between Europe and America used by Henry James. The resemblance between *Mansfield Park* and *The Europeans* is very close. The general theme of the brother and sister, representing an alien code of manners and conduct, who descend, with disturbing effect, into a provincial milieu, is common to both novels.⁵ The standards of behaviour and the idea of the proper way to live of Jane Austen's country people, are very similar to those of New England Puritanism. Sir Thomas Bertram and Mr Wentworth perform the same dramatic function. The parallel is not, of course, exact, but it is sufficiently close to make it difficult to believe that James had not the earlier story in mind. His treatment of the theme is more subtle and complex. It is as if he was writing in his own terms an ironical commentary on what is generally admitted to be one of the less satisfactory of Jane Austen's novels.

The counterpart in *The Europeans* to Edmund Bertram is the serious young clergyman Mr Bland. But in James's version the heroine does not marry him, but the representative of the more sophisticated civilization of Europe. Felix Young stands for moral health in a way that Henry Crawford (as the earlier part of *Mansfield Park* shows) cannot claim to do. On the other hand, Henry Crawford is not a Wickham or a Frank Churchill. Jane Austen seems to be working towards a development of his character, showing the favourable influence on him of Fanny, when she suddenly reverses

¹ *Sense and Sensibility*, pp. 170-1.

² *Mansfield Park*, p. 93.

³ *Ibid.* p. 341.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 433.

⁵ See F. R. Leavis's article in *Scrutiny*, vol. XV, No. 3.

the whole situation, and Henry Crawford returns to his previous irresponsibility. The weakness and unsatisfactoriness lies partly in her heroine. It appears that Jane Austen doubted Fanny Price's capacity, as she has presented her, to achieve the necessary transformation. There is a forced and melodramatic note at the beginning of the final chapter, when the story is rounded off:

Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can, impatient to restore every body, not greatly in fault themselves, to tolerable comfort, and to have done with all the rest.¹

'Impatient' is, the operative word here. The resemblance between Mary Crawford and the Baroness in *The Europeans* is closer, and their fates are the same. But, again, the final scene between Mary Crawford and Edmund Bertram is crude beside James's treatment of Robert Acton's act of rejection. Jane Austen has not given sufficient vitality or subtlety to Edmund Bertram's character to make his triumph of will-power either interesting or convincing. In her handling of the theme of the conflict between London and the country, she has come down too heavily and arbitrarily in favour of the latter. Our sympathies are, to a certain extent, engaged on behalf of the Crawfords, while in terms of humanity the Bertrams and Fanny Price fail to present any adequate alternative. In James's story, neither Europe nor New England is completely defeated. The discriminations made are much finer: the drama and artistry are both more complex and more consistent. The flaw in the moral pattern of *Mansfield Park* reflects a limitation in Jane Austen's artistic powers. The sort of limitation involved is suggested by Sir Thomas Bertram's thoughts on the departure of Mrs Norris:

To be relieved from her, therefore, was so great a felicity, that had she not left bitter remembrances behind her, there might have been danger of his learning almost to approve the evil which produced such a good.²

This is Jane Austen speaking, not Sir Thomas Bertram contemplating the ruin of his daughter. A lack of detachment and impersonality is responsible for a mistake in tone that jars. It is the same kind of error in taste as occurs at the beginning of *Northanger Abbey*:

A family of ten children will be always called a fine family, where there are heads and arms and legs enough for the number.³

This type of lapse happens when Jane Austen loses her interest and grip on the story. At such moments she is apt to indulge in stylistic

¹ *Mansfield Park*, p. 461.

² *Ibid.*, p. 466.

³ *Northanger Abbey*, p. 13.

exhibitionism, and to reveal a strange insensitiveness to ordinary human feelings. On a larger scale, this weakness can lead to the kind of unreality that mars whole scenes in *Mansfield Park*.

It need hardly be said that this is not the note on which to end in discussing what may be called the social background of Jane Austen's moral judgments. The fine discriminations in the realm of personal relationships in *Persuasion* are made by comparing the social worlds in which the characters live. The satire on the Elliots at Kellynch Hall, underlined by the arrival 'with true naval alertness' of the Crofts, is offset by the scenes at Uppercross, where the elder Musgroves 'in the old English style', are contrasted with the young people in the new. Through the consciousness of the heroine, the differences in manners, conduct, accomplishments, and intelligence are made clear. She learns 'the art of knowing our own nothingness beyond our own circle', a tolerant acceptance of the differences:

She acknowledged it to be very fitting, that every little social commonwealth should dictate its own matters of discourse; and hoped, ere long, to become a not unworthy member of the one she was now translated into.¹

All the novels, but *Emma* and *Persuasion* especially, are concerned with personal relationships interpreted in terms of the inter-actions, conflicts, and disagreements in these 'little social commonwealths' that Jane Austen, herself, knew.

The novels are not all equally successful or of equal interest. Despite the fact that Jane Austen constantly revised her work, so that there is no distinct gap between the Steventon and Chawton novels, the three to be finally published (excluding *Northanger Abbey*) are of a completely different type. The earlier stories are dominated by the necessary critical work of rejection, and tend towards parody, burlesque, and antithesis. While ridiculing current conventions, Jane Austen was still writing essentially in the same manner as Fanny Burney. *Pride and Prejudice* is rather too neatly balanced, and Mr Darcy is more like Lord Orville than someone observed and created at first-hand.

The most adverse criticism of the novels has accused them of evading any direct expression of passion. Charlotte Brontë's repugnance is well known. D. H. Lawrence has made the same point more briefly:

In the old England, the curious blood-connection held the classes together. The squires might be arrogant, violent, bullying and unjust, yet in some ways they were *at one* with the people, part of the same blood-stream. We feel it in Defoe or Fielding.

¹ *Persuasion*, p. 43.

And then, in the mean Jane Austen, it is gone. Already this old maid typifies 'personality' instead of character, the sharp knowing in apartness instead of knowing in togetherness, and she is, to my feeling, thoroughly unpleasant, English in the bad, mean, snobbish sense of the word, just as Fielding is English in the good, generous sense.¹

A complete vindication would not be an easy or simple matter, though the statement, as it stands, is palpably untrue. Even as late as *Persuasion*, characters such as Admiral Croft and his wife could hardly have been created without a sympathetic knowledge of Fielding. The relationship between Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth, though not one that would appeal to Lawrence, is hardly consistent with what he calls 'personality' and 'the sharp knowing in apartness instead of knowing in togetherness'. The famous paragraph, near the end of Chapter IV, in praise of early and imprudent marriages, states the central theme of the novel:

How eloquent could Anne Elliot have been — how eloquent at least, were her wishes on the side of early warm attachment, and a cheerful confidence in futurity, against that over-anxious caution which seems to insult exertion and distrust Providence! — She had been forced into prudence in her youth, she learned romance as she grew older — the natural sequel of an unnatural beginning.²

Persuasion is, perhaps, the one novel of Jane Austen's that deserves the adjective, usually only given to her fools, 'Shakespearean'. In *Northanger Abbey* one of the passages of poetry held up to ridicule is the one in which Viola describes her father's daughter, who sat like patience on a monument, smiling at grief. The climax of *Persuasion*, the discussion between Anne and Captain Harville on the subject of women's constancy, follows the lines of the debate between Viola and the Duke.

The cancelled chapter in *Persuasion*, and the method by which it was revised, provide the classic example of the close relation of style and judgment in the novels. What is added and what is taken away, are equally significant. Here one sees the technician at work at a moment of the greatest emotional stress. Some of the changes, such as the substitution of a letter for the simple direct confession of Captain Wentworth, may seem unfortunate. But there can be no doubt of the greater dramatic force of the final rendering. Changes from reported to direct speech, the slightest alteration of a word or phrase, the omission of trivial and irrelevant detail, the addition of

¹ *A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover*, p. 58.

² *Persuasion*, p. 30.

the apparently trivial but significant description, the whole armoury of Jane Austen's style, is to be seen here. The glowing triumph and joy of the scene is the result. As the immediate tension subsides we return to the ordinary world of the novels, the world of parties, and social gatherings, but the triumph and the joy remain:

The evening came, the drawing-rooms were lighted up, the company assembled. It was but a card-party, it was but a mixture of those who had never met before, and those who met too often — a common-place business, too numerous for intimacy, too small for variety; but Anne had never found an evening shorter.¹

Jane Austen would certainly be the last person to wish to have her claims to greatness over-stressed. Yet, when one considers the novelists with whom it is possible to make any comparison at all, there are very few. They include, perhaps, George Eliot, Henry James, Mr E. M. Forster, Tolstoy, and (a writer whose comments it would have been most amusing to have) Stendhal. The quality of mind that finally emerges from the novels is best conveyed in the charming lines that Jane herself wrote to the memory of Mrs Lefroy:

Listen! It is not sound alone, 't is sense,
'T is genius, taste, and tenderness of soul:
'T is genuine warmth of heart without pretence,
And purity of mind that crowns the whole.

She speaks! 'T is eloquence, that grace of tongue,
So rare, so lovely, never misapplied
By her, to palliate vice, or deck a wrong:
She speaks and argues but on virtue's side.

Her's is the energy of soul sincere;
Her christian spirit, ignorant to feign,
Seeks but to comfort, heal, enlighten, cheer,
Confer a pleasure or prevent a pain.

¹ *Persuasion*, p. 245.

VON WEIZSÄCKER'S APOLOGIA

W. H. C. FREND

1

VON WEIZSÄCKER'S memoirs,¹ written while in prison during 1948-50, must to some extent be a personal apologia. The former German State-Secretary has however, given a clear and revealing account of his work, and he has written without evident prejudice and bitterness. As he says in a verse dedicating his work to his wife, he would prefer to pass over in silence 'the zones of lack of comprehension', and those zones include much of the detail of the most recent period of his life.

The *Erinnerungen* were written with the aid of personal memoranda but without other documents. They do not suffer from that. The author is able to treat each phase of his life as a complete whole. He describes his career in the Imperial Navy with the same vigour and detail as he outlines his activities as State-Secretary. One follows him from on board the *Friedrich der Grosse* in which he took part in the battle of Jutland, to the Consulate at Basel, through the frustrating conferences at Geneva when he was a member of the German delegation, and then to Oslo, and to Berne where as German Minister he had a bitter experience of the intrigue of some of his Nazi subordinates. With his recall to Berlin on the death of von Bülow early in 1936, begins a period of eight years' activity in which his career becomes a part of the general history of our times. The last chapters where he tells of his experiences first as Ambassador to the Holy See, and then as 'guest', are among the most interesting of the book.

It is true that von Weizsäcker's memoirs tend to confirm previous impressions, rather than add much that is fresh regarding German foreign policy between 1937 and 1943. It is, however, interesting to have on record the former State-Secretary's view, that as early as 1936 the Foreign Ministry was sinking to the level of an executive organ of government (p. 129). Policy was being made elsewhere; and it is asserted, that Hitler's policy was not based on the reports of his accredited representatives abroad, but on what are described as, 'laienhafte, irreguläre Informationen'. These, investigation shows, were a mixture of gossip from journalists in Berlin, and travellers' tales by international busybodies who sought interviews with the Führer.

¹ Ernst von Weizsäcker, *Erinnerungen*. Paul List Verlag. München, 1950, pp. 391.

Thus, we learn that both the signature of the 'Gentlemen's Agreement' with Schuschnigg on July 11th, 1936, and the decision to intervene in the Spanish Civil War came about without the effective participation of the Foreign Ministry (pp. 129-30). The latter statement is confirmed from the German Foreign Ministry documents which have been published.¹ Members of the Auslandsorganisation who saw Hitler at Bayreuth on July 22nd seem to have had a decisive influence. On the other hand, it is doubtful whether the Foreign Ministry would have advocated a different course. On July 23rd a dispatch from the German Embassy in Madrid advised:

The consequences of a Government victory would be very grave for internal and foreign affairs. Domestically, they would insure Marxist control of Spain for a long time, with danger of a Spanish Soviet regime. As regards foreign policy, Spain, ideologically and materially would become closely allied to the Franco-Russian bloc. The effects of such a development on German-Spanish relations and on the Germans in Spain would be very serious. An opposite development would result in case of a victory of the monarchist-Fascist rebels.²

In this case, it hardly seems material from what source Hitler took his information, and it must be admitted that, while unofficial reports did play their part in influencing the minds of Hitler and Ribbentrop, the importance of these reports must not be exaggerated. Both men acted from deep-seated prejudices, and no report from whatever source was likely to be heeded if it did not square with these.

There are a few illuminating asides, and also descriptions of scenes of which Weizsäcker was witness. The informality of the session of the Four Powers at Munich on the afternoon of September 29th, von Weizsäcker's harsh criticism of Dr. Benes, 'einer der sicherste Wegbereiter Adolf Hitlers', (p. 194) and his judgment of Hitler himself, as representing a type which 'would have been less startling in Austria', and 'nothing out of the ordinary in Czechoslovakia' (p. 201) — these are typical. The last is an extraordinary comment on the depth of ill-feeling that existed between Czech and German in Czechoslovakia. Yet this seems so obvious to the writer that he does not bother to explain the allusion. Of interest too, is von Weizsäcker's reference to the activities of Göring's 'Forschungsamt' in the Luftfahrtministerium. (pp. 203-4). This was no ordinary research department, but an office which was employed almost exclusively in breaking down the codes used by foreign Missions in Berlin, includ-

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945. Series D., Vol. III, State Department, 1950, p. 1.* The volume has also been published by H.M. Stationery Office.

² *Ibid.* Document 4, p. 7.

ing the Italian. No doubt, it is always useful to know what the other man was going to say before he comes into the room. It must have been a great advantage, especially in times of crisis, for von Weizsäcker to have had on his desk the details of the instructions which Attolico had just received when he rang to ask for an interview.

But the real problem of von Weizsäcker's book is the problem of the author himself, who leaves the reader wondering why he was ever brought to trial, let alone condemned. The evidence is never discussed. On this issue one must draw a clear distinction between his personal guilt on the particular charge of abetting the murder of Jews in Europe, and on which he was condemned, and his general political responsibility for the foreign policy of his country.

On the first issue the case for the Prosecution was perfectly clear.¹ The Foreign Ministry had been represented at an important inter-departmental conference held in Berlin on January 20th, 1942, at which it was decided to evacuate some eleven million Jews to camps in Eastern Europe to serve in labour gangs. It was understood that few would survive. Von Weizsäcker was informed of the results of this meeting by his Under-Secretary of State, Martin Luther, who had been present.² During 1942 the Foreign Ministry co-operated fully with the Reichssicherheitsamt and the German occupation authorities, in moving the Jews from parts of occupied Europe and satellite countries to the East. No objections were raised. One particular instance was often quoted during the trial, and may be typical of many. On March 13th, 1942, the Foreign Ministry informed the German Embassy in Paris that the Chief of the Security Police and Security Service proposed to ship a further 5000 Jews 'from France to the concentration camp Auschwitz'. The embassy was asked for a report. The answer came back: 'There is no objection to the proposed evacuation of another 5000 Jews.' Thereupon, on March 20th, Weizsäcker and other senior officials in the Foreign Ministry informed the relevant Section in the Security Office: 'there is no objection on the part of the Foreign Ministry against the evacuation of 5000 French or stateless Jews, described in detail in the police records, to the concentration camp Auschwitz (Oberschlesien).'³ Auschwitz never enjoyed a favourable reputation, and many witnesses, including some of those called for the Defence, admitted that the State-Secretary had discussed the horrors of these camps with them.⁴ There was no question of ignorance of what was involved.

¹ See *Proceedings of Military Tribunal IV, Case No. 11. United States of America vs Ernst von Weizsäcker, et al. Final Brief on Criminal Responsibility under Count V of the Indictment (Murder of Jews in Europe), Part I. (= Final Brief).*

² *Final Brief*, Part I, p. 5.

³ *Ibid.*, Part II, p. 166, cf. p. 121.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-108.

It is a pity that the author does not speak more fully about the Foreign Ministry's responsibilities regarding the Jews. Admittedly, the documents that sent him to prison do not look very distinguished, and are thrust away in obscure files, but they passed through his hands and they bear his initials. All we are told is, that the Foreign Ministry was concerned with Jews in Europe who were the subjects of foreign powers — in fact, about 95 per cent of the whole — that practically nothing could be done for individuals, and that no responsible authority was prepared to speak up for the Jews; and further that the Foreign Ministry could hardly be expected to help, when organizations such as the International Red Cross and the Curia of Holy See remained dumb (p. 337-8). If this were indeed true, it would merely condemn these institutions; it would not acquit von Weizsäcker. One need not perhaps agree with the American Prosecutor that the author was, among 'the diplomatic technocrats who solved the Jewish problem finally through the genocidal murder of five to six million European Jews'.¹ But, some responsibility in the crime he did have; he failed to show the courage of his own convictions, and confinement for two years in quarters very different from Auschwitz, does not seem to be an unjust punishment.

On the question of his political responsibility for German foreign policy, the author is on safer ground. The Court acquitted him on the charge of preparing an aggressive war. Throughout his book he is at pains to show, both that this decision was the right one and that he himself was justified in sticking to his post as State-Secretary. Indeed, as justification for his passivity towards the horrors perpetrated against all who incurred Hitler's displeasure, he pleads that it was necessary to remain at his post to save what could be saved for western civilization. There was no possibility, he argues of acting as a second Talleyrand in an age of total war (p. 197). Resignation was futile, to work for the loss of the war was debasing; there remained only, to attempt to exercise a moderating influence through his office, and hope that Germany would rid herself of Hitler through her own efforts. His was the dilemma, his confidant Albrecht von Kassel told the reviewer during an interview in the German Embassy at the Vatican on July 23rd, 1944, 'of a man who loves his country but hates his Government and leaders'. One is prepared to some extent to accept that view of von Weizsäcker, despite his seemingly indifferent conduct towards von Hassell and others who in 1941-42 were ready to risk their lives in conspiracy against Hitler.

The author lays considerable stress on the memoranda he wrote for his Foreign Minister and on notes of conversations with him. Some of these have survived in the archives of the German Foreign Ministry and have been published. They are revealing documents.

¹ *Final Brief*, Part I, p. 10.

On June 20th, 1938, he wrote to Ribbentrop, 'But we have no military recipe for defeating France and Britain, even taking into account Italian and Japanese help, we would only be able to inflict injuries upon the limbs of our most dangerous foe, England, not strike her in the heart. The war would therefore end in our exhaustion and defeat. The common loser with us would be the whole of Europe, the victors chiefly the non-European continents and anti-social powers.'¹ The way to deal with Czechoslovakia was to assist a process of 'chemical disruption'. Once self-determination 'had been granted to the Sudeten Germans', the ultimate fate of the rump of Czechoslovakia, although it could not be clearly outlined, 'would be already sealed'.

This advice, to pursue pan-German policies in Central and Eastern Europe and yet avoid war, was repeated at intervals throughout the summer of 1938.² We can probably accept von Weizsäcker's statement that he worked in very close liaison with Attolico and Sir Nevile Henderson in both the Sudeten and Danzig crises, for from available evidence it seems that the outlooks of these three men were strikingly similar. There was certainly little reason during this period for von Weizsäcker to feel uncomfortable as Ribbentrop's State-Secretary. He agreed the basic policy, he was critical of the wisdom of the proposed methods of execution.

At the outbreak of war when his policy had so patently failed, should he have resigned? He might, as he says, have tried to go back to the Navy, or have chosen the harder road trodden by Pastor Niemöller. He sat tight. Did he still believe that Ribbentrop was 'teachable' as he did in 1938, or that it might be possible to localize the war and restore peace with the Western powers? If he did, he was deceiving himself as well as his friends. One effort, however, it is clear from the published documents, he did make in order to save his country from ultimate catastrophe. On April 28th, 1941, he wrote to Ribbentrop urging against an attack on Russia. 'A German attack on Russia would only give the British new moral strength. It would be interpreted there as German uncertainty as to the success of our fight against England. We would thereby not only be admitting that the war was going to last a long time yet, but we might actually prolong it in this way, instead of shortening it.'³ The advice was not taken, the German attack was launched, and von Weizsäcker after another nervous crisis, remained in office for two more years.

¹ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, vol. II, pp. 420-2.

² On July 21st, 1938, *Documents on Foreign German Policy*, vol. II, p. 504, cf. *Erinnerungen*, p. 166.

On August 19th, 1938, *Documents*, p. 593-4, *Erinnerungen*, p. 167-8.

On August 30th, 1938, *Documents*, p. 662-3, *Erinnerungen*, p. 171-2.

³ *Nazi-Soviet Relations*, State Department, 1948, pp. 333-334.

THE B.B.C.

MICHAEL OAKESHOTT

ON its first appearance, attention naturally fastened upon the considerations which fill the foreground of the Report¹ of the Committee on Broadcasting, and immediate comment took these as its text. But it is not less appropriate that subsequent reflection should turn to some of the questions started, but not pursued, in the Report. For, as must happen with an inquiry bound by specific terms of reference, the investigation often opened up topics which could not be explored and as often avoided what is important merely because it did not lie directly in its path; more materials were gathered than could be used, and what was used was arranged to construct a consistent argument. Consequently, with help rather than hindrance from the Report, but with some rearrangement of the information collected, the inquiring reader is able to compose for himself a picture of broadcasting in Britain today; and it is a picture which has some curious passages.

With us, broadcasting descended upon a literate population, a population which owed its education chiefly to newspapers and one accustomed to being entertained; and this, perhaps more than anything else, determined its character. In these circumstances broadcasting here could scarcely fail to be somewhat different from what it is, for example, in Russia. Chance (rather than design) made the activity a monopoly, deliberation kept it a monopoly and put it into the hands of a Public Corporation, and a masterful first Director General impressed a characteristic manner upon it. But it was a manner which, while leaving the patrons of broadcasting in some degree dissatisfied and making them in some degree rebellious, fitted tolerably their expectations. Of course, the B.B.C. began with a considerable reserve of popularity to draw upon. The wireless-set was a new toy and itself afforded entertainment, whatever was broadcast; and when the newness began to wear off, a habit of listening had been contracted which could be disappointed only by having nothing at all to listen to. Further, the expectations were largely the creation of the B.B.C. itself, and consequently were not so difficult to satisfy. But, when all this is admitted, it remains true that among what was broadcast the listener could usually find

¹ *Report of the Broadcasting Committee*, 1949. Cmd. 8116, H.M.S.O., 1951, 6s. 6d.

Appendix H: Memoranda Submitted to the Committee. Cmd. 8117, H.M.S.O., 1951, 10s. 6d.

something which was a good enough approximation to his desires for the divergencies (except in one or two respects) to pass unnoticed. It was some time before journalists began to tell listeners what they ought to think of the programmes, and until this happened the vast majority were on the whole uncritical of what they were given. A decade or more had to pass before the way things were going could be unmistakably detected.

It is sometimes said that too much is attributed to broadcasting; in itself, we are told, it is nothing more than an activity of dispersing or disseminating. It is spoken of as a 'a channel for communication', a means of bringing people in touch with one another, and our attention is called to the neutrality of the instrument. And there is some significance in this observation: it reminds us that the wireless transmitter, like the internal combustion engine, is a product of human inventiveness which carries with it the unfortunate suggestion that since we have discovered a means of doing something we are well advised to do it, and the more of it the better — a suggestion which seems to separate the activity of broadcasting from what is broadcast. No doubt a transmitter, like a telephone wire, exists when it is not being used and may not improperly be called a potential means of communication, but in fact what we mean by broadcasting is an activity which does not take place until a programme is broadcast: the neutrality of the instrument is not at all shared by the activity. The B.B.C. is not, and never has been, a mere channel of communication: it is the organization of an activity in which a particular and carefully composed product is disseminated.

The original Licence in 1926 precluded the B.B.C. from broadcasting an opinion of its own on matters of public policy, and in practice it does not overtly communicate its own opinion, if it has one, on any specific topic. Nevertheless, it has a policy, and what is broadcast springs, directly or remotely, from that policy. No attempt has been made to conceal this from us, and the long B.B.C. Memorandum which is printed with the rest of the written evidence received by the Committee contains only the latest of many statements of policy. But although the policy has never been concealed and has never seriously deviated from the inspired direction given it by the first Director-General, the passage of time has carried away some of the chaff and there can be no longer any doubt about what precisely is afoot. And it is something so remarkable that it could find the ready acceptance it seems to have found only in a world grown accustomed to remarkable happenings.

Policy is often most effectively revealed, not when it is being expounded, but when it is being applied, and the discussion of monopoly in the B.B.C. Memorandum may be recognized as an occasion of this sort if we observe that much of the argument in

favour of monopoly is, in fact, an attempt to show that the policy pursued by the B.B.C. would be difficult, if not impossible, for any but a monopolist organization. The foundation of B.B.C. policy, it appears, is the idea of broadcasting with a 'social purpose', broadcasting directed to the discharge of certain 'social responsibilities'. These include 'responsibility for impartiality, for the greatest possible freedom at the microphone, for the preservation of standards and the re-establishing on a broader basis of a regard for values, for the use of broadcasting as an educational medium and a means to raise public taste, for the discharge of broadcasting's duty to and in all the arts, for the encouragement of all artistic endeavour whether of creation or performance, for the use of broadcasting to develop true citizenship and the leading of a full life'; to which may be added, from another page, the responsibility for being 'a bastion against the tide seeking to submerge values in a disintegrating world'¹. In short, it is the policy of the B.B.C. to be a standard-bearer: to inquire into and take notice of its patrons' preferences, but instead of giving them exactly what they want now, to give them what they will want when they have been baptized in the broad stream of the Corporation's 'general educational purpose'.

It might be supposed that, alongside this high social purpose, the B.B.C. would consider itself to be the purveyor of entertainment of a more ordinary character; but the conjecture is frowned upon. The Charter holds it to be desirable that the Corporation should be a means of information, education and entertainment, and to these the tradition of the B.B.C. has added the raising of public taste. But in the policy of the B.B.C. they do not appear as disconnected activities, and it is thought pre-eminently important that the endeavour to raise public taste should never slacken or be excluded. This all-pervading purpose of the B.B.C. is articulated in three programmes, and there has been no more candid exposition of its policy than the words of the present Director-General:

It rests on the conception of the community as a broadly based cultural pyramid slowly aspiring upwards. This pyramid is served by three main programmes, differentiated but broadly

¹ There appears to be an unfortunate confusion of thought in this passage, arising from the ambiguity of the word 'broadcasting'. It combines the definition of social-purpose broadcasting as the observation of a duty or responsibility to use the transmitter to disseminate programmes designed to promote certain specified social ends, with the misleading suggestion that this duty is somehow imposed by the power to transmit — thus making it appear that social-purpose broadcasting is the only dutiful sort of broadcasting. But social-purpose broadcasting cannot be 'the *discharge* of broadcasting's duty to the arts', etc. (because there is not such antecedent duty); it is the *imposition* of a specific duty upon those who engage in broadcasting to use the transmitter for the encouragement of artistic endeavour, etc.

overlapping in levels of interest, each programme leading on to the other, the listener being induced through the years increasingly to discriminate in favour of the things that are more worthwhile. Each programme at any given moment must be ahead of its public, but not so much as to lose their confidence. The listener must be led from good to better by curiosity, liking and a growth of understanding. As the standards of the education and culture of the community rise so should the programme pyramid rise as a whole.

To these general statements of policy must be added one or two important details. It is not at all the desire of the B.B.C. to create a population of what are called 'passive' listeners (or viewers, in the case of television) who merely enjoy what they are given. Indeed, those who treat listening as a 'private pleasure' and do not allow it to induce in them 'public activity' are sent to the bottom of the class; the 'good listeners' are 'serious', 'active', 'responsible' listeners. Further, it is the policy of the B.B.C. to protect this great enterprise of education from interlopers; it welcomes (or tolerates) broadcasts addressed to British listeners from foreign countries, so long as they represent 'the people or the Government' of those countries; but it objects to foreign 'commercial' broadcasting (that is, broadcasting without a 'social purpose') reaching the British public, in the belief that it is 'bad' and that the 'bad' will inescapably drive out the 'good'. With regard to the opportunity afforded by Relay Exchanges for listeners to take a foreign programme in preference to a British, the B.B.C. has pronounced that its 'main concern is to ensure that the objectives of its broadcasting policy are not prejudiced . . . It desires to safeguard its standards of impartiality, its general programme policy, and its long-term educational intent'.

In order to pursue this policy wisely and with energy the B.B.C. has surrounded itself with advisory bodies, it broadcasts 37½ hours a day, and it employs a staff of nearly 12,000. Its aim is to make each of its programmes, including television, available to the vast majority of listeners in this island, and with the shortest possible delay. The promised time is not very far off 'when it is possible every evening for every citizen of this country not only to hear but to see what has been happening in the world that day: when the great events of nations and in the international field can be remotely "attended" by the inhabitants of almost every town and village; when the colour, the excitement, the variety and the worth-whileness of everyday life can be communicated to the richest the poorest, the loneliest and the most gregarious; when harmony, design and grace can be visually as well as audibly taken into every home; then there must surely be something added which, working with all the other

beneficent influences within the community, will have the capacity to make for a broader vision and a fuller life'.

Broadcasting in this country, then, is controlled by a policy: we have, first, a Corporation self-dedicated to the improvement of mankind according to a recipe of its own; and we have, secondly, that Corporation vested with the monopoly of broadcasting. We might have had neither of these things; we might have had the second without the first or (*pace* the B.B.C.) the first without the second; in fact we have both.

It is a situation so astonishing that we must be ready to listen to those who would warn us against exaggeration. We shall be reminded that, after all, the B.B.C. does not control all the sources of instruction and improvement in the country; it has the monopoly of only one of the instruments of education and entertainment. And we shall be told that, although the material broadcast is fitted to a policy, it is (one way or another) supplied by the society to which it is broadcast; the B.B.C. depends upon the current activities of society — the stage, the worlds of music, literature and learning, and the course of external events — which are independent of it, and it merely disseminates a selection from what these provide. There is, of course, truth and relevance in both these contentions; but when we consider the formidable power of the microphone, they offer little or nothing in mitigation of our situation. Both the B.B.C. and the Committee are aware of this power, but interpreting it solely in terms of 'pervasiveness', they mistake its character. For broadcasting (especially by a 'public-service' monopoly organization) is not mere dissemination, and its power does not derive merely from its range. Everything that is broadcast is unavoidably given an amplified significance; it not only travels far and wide, but it arrives at its various destinations with an immeasurably increased authority. The mere fact of broadcasting an opinion adds to the weight of its impact. The strongest argument against allowing some eccentrics on the air is not that they may give offence (which is the only argument considered by the Committee), but that the very fact of broadcasting it gives to the eccentricity an altogether false degree of importance. What was intended as an insignificant addition to the museum of popular curiosity becomes mistaken for a significant character or opinion. Broadcasting adds to whatever authority an opinion may already possess, endows with authority opinions which have none, and (without any intention of doing so on the part of the B.B.C.) unavoidably distorts our sense of proportion. It is not fanciful to suggest that there is nothing so important as to *merit* being broadcast — not even the time-signal. And it must not be forgotten that to all this must be added the fact that, in sound-broadcasting, the speaker is unseen. To be chosen to speak is to

acquire authority; to appear only as a voice entails a partial anonymity which obliquely acknowledges and at the same time amplifies the source of the authority.

To these heroic passages in this sketch of our situation must be added others of a somewhat different character. We need not, for the moment, consider the quality of the material used by the B.B.C. in its enterprise of evangelization, except to remark that here and there in its Memorandum the B.B.C. admits to difficulties in carrying out its policy. The material of the sought-for quality is not always available in the quantity required to fill the number of hours for which patrons now expect to be entertained or educated. But what is more important than the difficulties of the B.B.C. in maintaining its standards, is the part of the picture which concerns the audience: and here we descend from the sublime to the ludicrous.

There are now a little over twelve million licenced receiving sets. The B.B.C.'s Audience Research estimates that of those listening at any given moment in the evening 63 per cent are listening to the Light Programme, 36 per cent to the Home Service, and 1 per cent to the Third Programme (which has only a 50 per cent coverage as against the 97 per cent coverage of the two more popular programmes). For particular items the proportions may, however, be quite different. The same source of information detects the following order of preferences in the population as a whole — Variety, Plays, Light Music, Military Bands, Musical Comedy, Cinema Organs, Brass Bands, Religious Services, Discussions, Dance Bands, Talks, and so on. This suggests to the Committee that 'the types of programme most naturally suited to broadcasting as a means of communication are Plays and Light Music'; but a fairer inference than this recondite conclusion would perhaps be that the patrons of the B.B.C. prefer to be entertained while they are being evangelized. There is, however, one more piece of information which must be taken into consideration — the most sardonic passage in the picture — 'the bulk of listeners treat listening as a secondary activity, a background noise while they are doing something else'. An odd situation. It is as if a benevolent newspaper proprietor were spending a fortune in an attempt to provide elevating reading-matter for mankind, only to discover that the vast bulk of those who bought his product never read a line of it, but used it for wrapping up fish and chips.

A sketch does not pretend to explore every detail, but there is another feature of our situation which is important enough to be observed: the B.B.C. is not merely convinced of the merit of its policy but, when called upon, expounds it with an altogether remarkable show of self-righteousness — a priggishness which reaches such proportions in the Memorandum submitted to the Committee

satire

as to make one wonder what sort of persons these are who control that considerable part of our life over which their monopoly presides. Even the most sympathetic reader must find this parade of 'social purpose' and 'public service' tiresomely sanctimonious: surely nothing should be taken quite so seriously as the B.B.C. takes itself. The schoolmasterish disposition towards its patrons is difficult enough to stomach, but when it descends to a deeper level, and the St. George-and-the-Dragon attitude makes its appearance, we may be forgiven (even when we exclude the more grotesque expressions of this attitude) if we reach the conclusion that here is something altogether excessive. At any rate, pretensions of this character unavoidably bring those who exhibit them upon the carpet. Those who endeavour to pass for the lights of the world must expect to attract the eyes of it, and their small blemishes are more justly ridiculous than much greater in those who are more modest. And perhaps the most curious characteristic of the Report is that it does not occur to the Committee to do anything but endorse and applaud this attitude — except, indeed, to add its own peculiar contribution of sententiousness. Glutted with 'public service' and bludgeoned with 'social purpose', the reader finds himself in the mood of the Frenchman who was so disgusted with the word *fraternité* *que si j'avais véritablement un frère je l'appellerais mon cousin*.

This, briefly, is the picture which emerges: to say the least, it is curious. Broadcasting in Great Britain is, in intention, nothing less than a far-reaching experiment in universal education conducted by persons whose activities are to some extent circumscribed but are virtually uncontrolled. They recognize a responsibility to the nation, but it is a responsibility for the maintenance of standards of thought and opinion and taste which they have themselves determined and in a great variety of fields. Nothing like it exists anywhere else in the world, for a similar intensity of control is matched elsewhere by a restriction of the field of interest; and one wonders whether it would exist here if we had known from the beginning what was afoot. The easy acceptance of the B.B.C. by a nation which for so long has avoided an authoritative Academy of Letters and a unified system of school or university education may be supposed to argue at least some absence of mind. Indeed, the acceptance is perhaps understandable only when we turn from the intention to the result which bulks largest, and recognize in the B.B.C. a monopoly providing a 'background noise'.

Now, if this is anything like the truth of our situation, the conclusion of the Committee, that the fundamental question for decision is the 'issue of monopoly', seems a little near-sighted. It might be thought that some room would have been found for the consideration of the much larger and more important question —

whether broadcasting conducted on a policy such as that pursued by the B.B.C. is desirable at all. And it might be supposed that it would be time enough to consider monopoly when this question had been answered. Of course there must be attention to standards; but it is not unreasonable to ask whether these particular standards and this particular, over-heated pursuit of a narrowly conceived social purpose is the proper object for broadcasting, or whether what is desirable is something less highfalutin'. For if we are bidden choose between broadcasting conducted in the manner of the B.B.C. and the supposed standardless bedlam of commercial broadcasting we are offered an incomplete range of alternatives. And that the Committee did not address itself to this question is the more remarkable because the most cogent arguments against monopoly which it had to listen to were, in fact, not against monopoly itself, but against monopoly exercised by a Corporation with a severe and self-determined policy of social uplift. However, on account of a confused concern with insignificant detail, the full force of these arguments seems never to have been felt by the Committee, the majority having accepted in advance the propriety of broadcasting with the special kind of social purpose which is characteristic of the B.B.C.

When we reflect upon the desirability of broadcasting in the manner of the B.B.C., it is perhaps relevant to consider how the B.B.C.'s pursuit of its policy has worked out in practice — to consider, that is, the place the B.B.C. (not as a monopoly, nor as the provider of a 'background noise', but as a guide in matters of taste and education) has come to occupy in our society. And the Report does not leave us unprovided with information on this topic.

The impact of the B.B.C. upon school education, for example, is great and is growing: is it a happy one? Do we regard with equanimity a public corporation (whether or not it enjoys a monopoly) which invites itself into the schoolroom with the offer of stimulants, 'the voices of the outstanding men of our time', 'new facts', 'specialized knowledge' presented by 'highly skilled broadcasters', and all this accompanied with instructional pamphlets and school prayers? It is not merely a jaundiced eye which may discern in this (and perhaps in much else of the B.B.C.'s general educational effort) an encouragement of one of the less good products of contemporary education: the extensive mind, curious, interested, pseudo-sympathetic, preferring many contacts to few intimacies, preferring fact to thought and crowded with a disordered array of imperfectly realized images — the quiz mentality. Do we look forward to a uniform curriculum with ushers to turn on the wireless-set and keep order? And if (with the B.B.C. and the Committee) we have no such hopes, what, we may ask ourselves, relieves us of our

fears? Already the B.B.C. is applauded (by some members of the Committee) for being a 'unifying force' in education, and the educational prospects of television are said to 'seem almost boundless'. Of course, the remedy is in our hands: we may choose what seems good to us from all that is offered, or, if nothing seems good, we need not participate at all. But this is to reckon without the prestige of the B.B.C. and to neglect the laziness of mankind; to expect the worst is less foolish, all things considered, than to hope for the best. The schoolmaster need not fear to lose his job; he need fear only the ease and corruption which comes from having done for him what he should do for himself.

Or consider the News Bulletins broadcast by the B.B.C. A cloud of witnesses testified before the Committee to the high standard of impartiality; but when this is taken for granted, as it may be, there are other things to reflect upon. The world as it appears in the pages of a newspaper is a thing of rags and tatters, grim, grotesque, erratic and entertaining, and any sensible man chooses his newspaper for the quality of imagination which has gone to compose the picture it offers: truth, except in dull detail, nobody asks for. With this, of course, a B.B.C. bulletin cannot compete: the picture of the world it offers is necessarily more selective. But it is selected with a gravity which no newspaper would emulate. The world as it appears to the B.B.C. has room for trivialities, but their triviality is underlined; no listener is left in any doubt that life is earnest. 'The object', says the Memorandum, 'is to state the news of the day accurately, fairly, soberly and impersonally', but to complete the catalogue the word 'continuously' should have been added. No doubt we owe the multiplicity of news bulletins to the war, but is it in the public interest, and to what interpretation of social purpose does it belong, to keep the listening public informed, in a continuous situation report, about the dull and doubtful detail of the serious nonsense that is taking place all over the world? And when to the ten main daily news bulletins are added News Reels, days and weeks in Parliament, and the promise that before long every evening every citizen of this country will be able to see on the television screen what has happened in the world that day, we may wonder whether the bastion against the tide seeking to submerge values in a disintegrating world has not itself sprung a leak. Of course a news service, like a bus service, must run just in case anyone should be needing it: we cannot all listen at the same times. But this turns it into the 'sale of a popular commodity'; as a whole, its educational effect is to encourage idle curiosity: listening to the news is becoming a nervous ailment.

Or consider, to take a last example, the B.B.C. as an entertainer. It is a characteristic of the world we live in that activities which used to have their times and seasons, and were marked by a certain

ceremoniousness, are now carried on continuously: we work day and night, holidays are staggered, only the ancient festivals come at their proper intervals and consequently retain a significance and power over the imagination which nothing else can acquire. Entertainment, like the rest, is splintered, and the B.B.C. as an entertainer could not expect to be an exception to the rule. But in this matter, as in others, the scale into which the B.B.C. puts the weight of its influence will go down with a bump. The Derby, which one might witness once in a life-time and retain as a brilliant and happy memory to the end of one's days, can be seen in an attenuated form every year without moving from the house; listening to a play (or seeing it) is a daily opportunity, offered euphemistically as 'theatre'; the possessor of a wireless set is never at a loss for an escape from his own thoughts or from the conversation of his companions. Of course, once again, the reply is that nobody is compelled to listen, that in fact people who listen also go to the theatre; but it is a reply which either misses the real impact of broadcast entertainment or recognizes broadcast entertainment merely as the provision of a popular commodity. The felt necessity of filling all those hours with entertainment corrupts the entertainers, because it is impossible without including a quantum of material which nobody could be happy in using; and the opportunity of turning on the tap corrupts the listener in the same manner as the ready supply of tinned food corrupts the cook. This is not, however, to say that the B.B.C. as an entertainer has done nothing to win the approval of even the severest critic. When the conversation turns to criticize the B.B.C., the *Lifeman* has an easy entrance with the gambit: 'but not the music'; and one does not require to spur one's generosity to agree that here is a remarkable achievement.

The policy of the B.B.C. in operation seems, then, to raise two main questions, one concerning quality and the other relating to quantity. And neither of these questions is properly discussed in the Report: the quality is merely applauded and the quantity scarcely considered. Our answers to both will, no doubt, be influenced by the consideration of monopoly, but neither can be reduced to this consideration. Of the first enough perhaps has been said already. The problem is not how to *improve* the standards of the B.B.C., or how to bring about a closer coincidence of performance and standard, but whether these are the proper standards to impose upon the activity of broadcasting. At any rate, the opinion of the Committee, and of the B.B.C. itself, that what alone justifies monopoly is the quality of the article at present dispensed is a proposition which calls for further reflection rather than for immediate assent. On the lowest level, it is open to question whether the antics in which the maintenance of 'impartiality' involves the B.B.C. do not suggest that broadcasting

is being made to pursue a too ambitious course; and perhaps what is indicated is not the abolition of monopoly but a reduction of the activities in which impartiality is desirable.

What the B.B.C. broadcasts is, in quantity, pre-eminently suitable for the invalid, the house-bound and the inhabitant of remote places. To be able to turn it on at any moment in 17 hours out of the 24 is, for these, a benefit; for others it is a potential source of distraction. The indiscriminate competitive exploitation of the internal combustion engine has transformed our manner of life without demonstrably improving it, and there is little to show that the relentless and efficient exploitation of the power to transmit by a public service broadcasting monopoly is not having a similar result. And the opportunity which the Committee had of making recommendations which might change what has become a mere natural urge into a morally discriminating activity (so far as quantity is concerned) has unhappily been missed: the 'courage of abnegation', which the present Director-General urged upon those who devote themselves to broadcasting, finds only a distant echo in the Report, which mentions (without pursuing) the question 'whether the B.B.C. is not endeavouring to broadcast too many different programmes for more hours than is necessary'. Apart from considerations of monopoly, then, the quantity of broadcasting is something that might have received a more critical attention in the Report. But there can be little doubt that the eagerness and energy with which the B.B.C. has exploited its instrument is partly the outcome of monopoly: there was a felt necessity to show that monopoly and laziness or lack of enterprise in this case were not partners. And no doubt this is the spring of the strange assumption that broadcasting itself has somehow a 'duty' to discharge 'to and in all the arts', etc. But to suggest a continuation of the monopoly while suggesting nothing to relieve the B.B.C. from the supposed duty of ruthlessly exploiting its instrument is an unfortunate omission from the Committee's recommendations.

In short, enough evidence and argument was presented to the Committee to convince most people of the undesirability of approximating broadcasting in England to the American pattern, and of the difficulty involved in dispersing the monopoly between two or more corporations. The witnesses who favoured a move in this direction were inspired by the laudable desire for greater diversity of programme (that is, a desire to free us from exclusive reliance on the B.B.C.'s standards in broadcasting), and they seemed to think that this might spring from competing broadcasting organizations. But there is little evidence that competition itself produces diversity — rather the reverse. We enjoy a variety of newspapers, but wherever there is genuine competition there is less diversity (except in opinion)

than makes no matter. And again, some argument (not very convincing and all based upon the assumed desirability of broadcasting inspired by the sort of social purpose which inspires the B.B.C.) is marshalled by the Committee itself to support its recommendation of a continuation of the present arrangements. But what does not seem to have been considered (and is consequently worth mentioning here) is the case for monopoly joined with a less grandiose purpose than that which guides the B.B.C. And this is surprising, for such a monopoly offers an escape from many of the recognized dangers and excesses which belong to the present situation. So large and so unwieldly a Corporation would be unnecessary, its position as sole employer of broadcasters would become less significant, the burden of responsibility which now alternately spurs and restrains the B.B.C. would be removed, the fortuitous and unsought authority which it now enjoys would fade away, and the enormous power it exercises over mens' minds would once more cease to be exercised by any single body. In such a monopoly there would be no danger, only convenience. And if some of the valuable potentialities of broadcasting remained unexploited, that perhaps would be a small price to pay for the removal from our midst of a concentration of power recognized by everybody, including the Committee, to be dangerous.

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

A STUDY IN THE POETRY OF ROBERT BRIDGES

J. M. COHEN

IN 1879 Swinburne retired to The Pines: in the same year Robert Bridges published, in a strictly limited edition, the second group of his *Shorter Poems*. Romanticism seemed about to yield to classicism. For some such automatic cycle of fashion was widely assumed to govern the arts. Arnold had already indicated the way back — or forward — to Hellenism, in his advocacy of the classical subject. 'I fearlessly assert', he wrote in the preface to his 1853 volume, 'that *Hermann and Dorothea*, *Childe Harold*, *Jocelyn*, *The Excursion*, leave the reader cold in comparison with the effect produced upon him by the latter books of the *Iliad*, by the *Oresteia*, or by the episode of Dido. And why is this? Simply because in the three latter cases the action is greater, the personages nobler, the situations more intense: and this is the true basis of the interest in a poetical work, and this alone.' His classical play *Merope* aimed not only at the nobility of classical myth, but at a grand style. Bridges' attempts to write in classical form were as studied as Arnold's, but they did not subscribe to the legend of the grand style. Largely perhaps because of his early friendship with Gerard Manley Hopkins, Bridges was pre-occupied, always, with the search for new metres and fresh language. In his old age he praised Kipling at the expense of Wordsworth for his use of spoken rhythms; yet his own work, especially when most experimental, lacked all flavour of the colloquial; and the loose alexandrines of *The Testament of Beauty* must seem to us as deliberate, and as unsuccessful, an attempt to create a fresh literary convention as the verse of Doughty's rugged epics. It is as a romantic poet that Bridges will survive, a romantic with his roots deep in the Elizabethan age and in the experiences of his own childhood, in his own Berkshire and Oxfordshire landscape, and his own very happy marriage. The classical subject appealed to his very reticent nature, to his gentlemanly reluctance to speak about himself; but he could never fill it, even to the extent that Swinburne did in *Atalanta*, with his own significances. The myths of *Prometheus the Firegiver*, of *Achilles in Scyros*, or of *Demeter* never became his own; all three poems were exercises in a technique, which only sprang into life in occasional passages of natural description.

Throughout his life he distrusted enthusiasm — in its eighteenth-century sense. His schooldays and his years at Oxford were a

turmoil of religious controversy. His earliest friendships were with men in the toils of religious questioning and catholic conversion. D. M. Dolben, a fellow Etonian, whose memoir he later wrote, was drowned at the age of seventeen, leaving a little promising poetry and a history of emotional to-ings and fro-ings between Newman and the High Anglicans. Other friends at the time were in similar confusion, and Hopkins, whom he came to know at Oxford, moved resolutely from conversion to priesthood. It is clear from his Dolben memoir that, as a boy, Bridges was himself drawn towards ritualism. But in later years he had moved so far away from all this that he found himself wondering how he 'had first come to imbibe these notions'. They left him with a permanent distrust for religious extremes. 'They're having a fight in a cupboard,' he observed to his friend Edward Thompson of a later clerical controversy. 'They've left the cupboard door open. But it's a fight in a cupboard all the same.' His early poetry was only classical in the sense that it endeavoured to keep the cupboard door shut. He wished to make no display of his feelings.

Born into a leisured class, deeply attached to Kent, to family, school and university, he was conservative in politics and culture; so conservative in fact that he seldom credited those who differed from him with holding a reasoned or other than a self-interested point of view. But, in relation to his writing, he was from the first an academic radical. 'The better a man writes now', he pronounced in 1914, 'the worse he writes. The old forms are worn out.' There had been in his drawer for a quarter of a century the poems of his friend G. M. Hopkins, which were to play so large a part in the creation of new forms; but Bridges' radicalism was not sufficiently extreme for him to recognize their significance. His attempts to develop Mr. Stone's classical prosodies led him into experiments not only cacophonous but dull. None of his most perfect lyrics departs further from the English norm than did the unrhymed poems of Campion; and if a few of the narrative poems of his very last years move less awkwardly than does most of *The Testament of Beauty*; if such pieces in the 1921 volume as *Poor Poll*, *The Tapestry* and *Kate's Mother* succeed, it is rather because feeling has been allowed to inform experiment, than because the metres themselves have extended the range of the traditional medium.

The young Doctor Bridges, walking his London hospital, did not proclaim himself a poet. He had resolved, however, to quit the medical profession and give himself up to poetry at the age of forty. In point of fact, owing to a serious illness, he did so rather earlier. His life from that time on, and after his late marriage, was an extended middle age with two peaks of achievement: the first or lyrical phase, ending with the century; and the second, filling the last

years of his life, from his seventieth to his eighty-fifth year. This second was productive of more than mere lyricism, though the lyrics remain his finest work, and the *Testament* as a whole must be considered a failure. Between these two peaks lie fifteen years devoted to largely nugatory experiment, pedantic work in the fields of language and spelling reform, rich social life and family happiness.

His earliest poems are Elizabethan in influence, and his sonnet sequence *The Growth of Love* tells a story of wooing and loss as hard to disentangle as that of any sixteenth-century sonneteer. This is scarcely strange, for the collection was supplemented by a number of sonnets written subsequently and interpolated according to Bridges' own whim, perhaps the better to disguise the experience on which it was based. The eighth of the finished sequence is not only typical but offers the first statement of the philosophy of beauty which, with his moderate Anglicanism, was for Bridges throughout his life, the stuff of his belief:

For beauty being the best of all we know
Sums up the unsearchable and secret aims
Of nature, and on joys whose earthly names
Were never told can form and sense bestow;
And man hath sped his instinct to outgo
The step of science; and against her shames
Imagination stakes out heavenly claims,
Building a tower above the head of woe. . . .

Many of the set begin with lines of some distinction, but most of them become bogged down in prosaic argument. Yet, even as prose, 'the shames of science' lack precision. The initial affirmation is, however, a permanent statement of belief, which reappears later, recast in a bare three lines, in the *Testament*:

That ther is beauty in nature and that man loveth it
are one thing and the same; neither can be derived
apart as cause of the other. . . .

His Platonism was, in an age when order, leisure and authority were passing away, in essence defensive; but his was more than a regretful aestheticism. For him there were permanent values, as durable as those which Hopkins had found in Catholicism; unlike his friend, however, he was unable to incorporate his beliefs into his poetry: they remained a dialectic excrescence.

The true poet in Bridges looked backwards to Philip Sidney and the Elizabethan songbooks, and inwards to his own passionate experience. That exquisite lyric *I will not let thee go*, in the first of his collections of short poems, is as deeply personal as those lyrics of Shelley's which he so much loved; and in other pieces

there is a magic simplification that looks forward to Walter de la Mare:

Dusky and duskier grows the room,
Yet I see her best in the darker gloom.

When the winter eves are early and cold,
The firelight hours are a dream of gold.

And so I sit here night by night,
In rest and enjoyment of love's delight.

The second book of *Shorter Poems* was dedicated to the memory of G.M.H. and, in it and the third, there are poems that owe much to Hopkins' new rhythms. In Bridges' hands these make rather for formalism than for freedom. The climax of the poem *On a dead Child* fails entirely to rise above prose reasoning. Bridges' feeling for suffering was very acute and the poem was founded on his experience at Barts; yet the cumulative lines are rhetorical:

Death, whither hath he taken thee?
To a world, do I think, that rights the disaster of this?
The vision of which I miss,
Who weep for the body, and wish but to warm thee and awaken thee?

Hopkins' experiments would have been barren without his passion, and the poem of this group which won his Jesuit friend's warmest praise, *Thou didst delight mine eyes*, was — like all those in which Bridges allowed his feelings to control him — in the direct descent from Wyatt and Sidney.

The congested, Saxonlike, texture of Hopkins' verse, his twisted syntax and unfamiliar words were seldom the result of awkwardness or the mere imitation of his models; but when they occur in Bridges they too often are. Hopkins' example, and the theories he derived later from *Samson Agonistes*, account for many a turgid passage in Bridges' poems. Hopkins convicted him in a letter of using a phrase from his *Wreck of the Deutschland* in *The Voice of Nature*, a poem 'written by the rules of a new prosody', and the possibly unconscious plagiarism throws the practice of the two poets into the strongest contrast. Hopkins' verse is taut and congested:

I admire thee, master of the tides,
Of the Yore-flood, of the year's fall;
The recurb and the recovery of the gulf's sides,
The girth of it, and the wharf of it and the wall;
Stanching, quenching ocean of a motionable mind;
Ground of being, and granite of it: past all
Grasp God, throned behind
Death with a sovereignty that heeds but hides, bodes but
abides; . . .

Bridges' address to the flood is flaccid, and more conventionally elegiac. 'The touch in rhythm', as Hopkins said of it, 'as well as diction is not quite sure.' The fourth line in the following quotation is, I feel, a deliberate distortion of the poem's pattern, an attempt to incorporate a strange technical device:

Ah, if it were only for thee, thou restless ocean
Of waves that follow and roar, the sweep of the tides;
Wer't only for thee, impetuous wind whose motion
Precipitate all o'errides, and turns, nor abides . . .

Both *A Passer by* and *Nightingales* owe something to the new prosody; but in their case Saintsbury's judgment was not far out when he wrote of the third *Shorter Poems*: 'When the new prosody is worth much, it seems to us to be reducible with advantage to the old'. This was true of all Bridges' experiments but never of Hopkins. Only 'London Snow' made almost entirely successful use of the new theories, thanks to a freshness unusual in Bridges. His eye was often keen, yet his powers of living description were strangely limited, and the attraction for him of stock poetic language was one that he was rarely able to resist for long. Even *London Snow* is not wholly free of it. 'Hiding difference', he says of the snow,

making unevenness even,
Into angles and crevices softly drifting and sailing.
All night it fell, and when full inches seven
It lay in the depth of its uncompacted lightness,
The clouds blew off from a high and frosty heaven . . .

The snowfall is observed and beautifully recorded, but for the phrase 'full inches seven', which fatally recalls 'Full fathom five'. Hopkins, whose criticisms of poems were habitually pernickety, did not call Bridges' attention to this. He was on this occasion more interested in tracing plagiarisms of himself, and in pedantically insisting that there is no such word as 'disillusion'. 'Disenchantment' it should be, he insisted. The fourth book of the *Shorter Poems* shows a waning of his influence; only a couple of accents in one piece, to inform the reader of its intended rhythm, remain as a tribute to the recently dead friend. Yet his influence had not departed for ever; an echo of his rhythms survives even in a passage of the *Testament*:

The sky's unresting cloudland, that with varying play
sifteth the sunlight thru' its figured shades, that now
stand in massiv range, cumulated stupendous
mountainous snowbillowy up-piled in dazzling sheen . . .

For a while, though, Bridges threw it off, only to lapse in his less

inspired work into an archaism of diction that was equally fatal to him. But for the persistence of the old forms of verb and pronoun in this 1890 volume, but for its indulgence in stock poetic inversion, it would really be, as Housman said of it, 'the most perfect book of verse ever written' — always supposing that Housman intended to limit the word 'ever' to his own times. Arthur Symonds' praise was equally whole-hearted. For him Bridges' mannerisms were not archaic, 'but a thinking back' — to Elizabeth times — 'as of one who really, in thought, lives in another age, to which his temper of mind is more akin'. In my opinion the best of them — and these are more than half — develop the Elizabethan vein, which had been all along most natural to Bridges, until it is free from all trace of deliberate poeticism:

When my love was away,
Full three days were not sped,
I caught my fancy astray
Thinking if she were dead,

And I alone, alone:
It seemed in my misery
In all the world was none
Ever so lone as I.

This is the best of Bridges, and this fourth book of his lyrics contains many of these poems of simple feeling, which he wrote from time to time throughout his life. He was also, however, an elegist of remarkable power. For the beauty that he sought to create as a rampart against the stream of time was for ever sapped and undermined by a feeling of impermanence. His most constantly recurring images are of autumn, or of the bare symmetry of a winter tree. 'I hate spring,' Edward Thompson remembers his exclaiming. 'All wet and clammy and damp!' His is a wintry picture of the countryside, haunted by the intrusive 'engine' with its 'lowering smoke', and his happiest visions, when not of love satisfied, look back to childhood,

Where the young sons of heav'n, with shouts of play
Or low delighted speech, welcome the day,
As if the poetry of the earth had slept
To wake in ecstasy.

These are not the Greeks of his dramas, but the fellow Etonians of his boyhood. Of the elegies the finest is *The Summerhouse on the Mound*, where

grew two fellow limes, two rising trees,
Shadowing the lawn, the summer haunt of bees,

Whose stems, engraved with many a russet scar
 From the spear hurlings of our mimic war,
 Pillar'd the portico to that wide walk. . . .

In it his childhood at Walmer is remembered with a rich immediacy that he preserved up to the end of his life, and recorded for the last time in *Kate's Mother*, with its memories of the cottage to which he and his sisters walked in childhood. It was there in Kent, in his earliest years, before his father's death and his mother's remarriage, that he had left

My other self, whom I miss
 In life's familiar moods,
 And ken of only by his kiss
 In sacred solitudes;

He is of such immortal kind,
 His inwit is so clean,
 So conscient with the eternal Mind —
 The self of things unseen,

That when within his world I win,
 Nor suffer mortal change,
 I am of such immortal kin
 No dream is half so strange.

Bridges at his most perfect is the poet of childhood remembered, and of a deeply joyful experience sometimes arising from love and sometimes met with in nature. It is several times recorded in his last poems. For at the very end of his life he seems to have looked back over his eighty years or more, and recognized what was most significant in them:

Thus ever at every season in every hour and place
 visions await the soul on wide ocean or shore
 mountain forest or garden in wind and floating cloud
 in busy murmur of bees or blithe carol of birds:
 nor is it memoried thought only nor pleased sense
 that holds us, nor whate'er reason sits puzzling out
 of light or atom. . .

It is a deeper thrill, the joy that lovers learn
 taking divine instruction from each other's eyes,
 in Truth that all men feel gazing upon the skies
 in constellated Night.

Here he is with Wordsworth and not with Kipling, and the slightly archaic diction is redeemed by the striking simplicity of what he says.

'He rises to a certain altitude', wrote Patmore in criticism of his early *Prometheus*, 'not the very highest but still very high — and can remain there as long as he chooses, and apparently without any fatigue.' That he could rise I do not dispute, but that he could remain on a high level for long I do not think any critic would now affirm. The eight dramas are, except for a few passages of description, utterly undistinguished. He had no sense of the theatre, and not the least interest in dramatic production. His plots were drawn from Greek legends, Latin historians, Terence, Lope or Calderón. Calderón even supplied an occasional speech. *Nero*, the most ambitious, was charitably described by Hopkins as 'sick-lid o'er a bit with an Elizabethan diction'. 'I am convinced', he had noted, however, rather earlier, 'it is one of the finest plays ever written.' It is difficult to imagine the purpose of this empty compliment. Hopkins was often morbidly afraid of giving offence, or of involving himself — and by implication his Order — in controversy. But this obviously insincere praise, wedged between a pair of brackets at the tail end of a letter, is hard to explain. He had not been sparing in his criticism of the somewhat duller *Ulysses*. 'We never escape very far', says Edward Thompson of their stock dramatic situations, 'from the generous, trustful world of the charade, in which Achilles has only to put on a skirt to be completely disguised for his sojourn among the maidens, and a bush is at hand for every eavesdropper'.

Of the other long works, *Eros and Psyche* is a pleasant piece, more than slightly reminiscent of *The Earthly Paradise*, while *Prometheus* and *Demeter* attempt to revive the Greek dramatic form with less success than *Merope*. The choruses have sometimes passages in which the poet is roused to write of something felt or experienced. Hopkins even spoke of them as 'Greek and yet so fresh'. But Bridges had no vital link with the classic past. His reconstruction of it was deliberate and uninspired; and his sympathy with the classical attitude so lacking that he could not read Dryden or Pope.

The Testament of Beauty, like Doughty's epics, is couched in an idiom that savours of the mock antique. It is curious that the same idiom, used for a more homely purpose in such poems of his old age as *Poor Poll*, *The Tapestry* and *Kate's Mother* has a much lighter, more casual and colloquial effect. *The Testament* is portentous. It claims to be making a general statement, but succeeds only in bringing together a number of anecdotes, reflections and didactic passages which his myth of the charioteer with his twin horses of Selfhood and Breed does not succeed in uniting. Bridges' attitude to life was dignified, conservative and humane, but it was not capable of presentation on such a scale. The wisdom that he had gathered in his long life was contained rather in the last lyrics

and reflective poems than in the over long *Testament*. Even his vision of nature seems dwarfed into formalism by the would-be Lucretian scope of his poem, though his winter pictures retain something of his old charm:

How was November's melancholy endeared to me
in the effigy of plowteams following and recrossing
patiently the desolat landscape from dawn to dusk,
as the slow-creeping ripple of their single furrow
submerged the sodden litter of summer's festival!
They are fled, those gracious teams; high on the headland now
squatted, a roaring engin toweth to itself
a beam of bolted shares, that glideth to and fro
combing the stubbled glebe: and agriculture here,
blotting out with such daub so rich a picture of grace,
hath lost as much of beauty as it hath saved in toil.

The initial picture has the immediacy of something seen, but the reflections are awkward and ungainly. It would have shocked Bridges to think that all he had contrived with his 'loose alexandrines' was a less smooth equivalent of the eighteenth-century couplet. The *Testament* is a far less readable poem than Cowper's *Task*, and a far more pretentious one.

The lyrics of Bridges' last years are, on the other hand, as beautiful as the best of the *Shorter Poems*. Still the follower of Wyatt and the Elizabethans, he was able to preserve the essentials of traditional form, while creating something personal in its statement yet anonymous in the universality of its feeling. 'What is unique in them', wrote Edward Thompson in his memoir, 'is their impersonal quality'. He really was singularly uninterested in his own personality'. This, I think, tells only half the truth. When Bridges attempted an impersonal theme, to retell the tales of *Eros and Psyche* or write a drama on the subject of *Nero*, he failed; for these were only exercises in craftsmanship, which too often interested him for its own sake. When, however, he wrote a lyric out of deep personal experience, he was able to strain off the mere chance circumstances of the occasion and distil a spirit which was impersonal because it embodied an experience common to all. This is true of many of the *Shorter Poems*; it is true of the elegies; it is true of passages from the longer poems; but it is most true of the lyrics of old age in his last two volumes, especially of those which look back on his early years. 'I do not believe that any poet ever remembered his youth as perfectly as Bridges did,' wrote Thompson. What better epilogue could there be to the turgid ratiocinations of the *Testament* than *Low Barometer*?

And reason kens he herds in
A haunted house. Tenants unknown
Assert their squalid lease of sin
With earlier title than his own.

It is to the 'unknown tenants' that Bridges owes his poetry; the conservative reasoner with the later title was, fortunately, never quite able to dispossess them.

Bridges is at a disadvantage with the modern reader, since even his finest poems lie along 'the road not taken'. The classicism that he envisaged did not develop. The poetry of his friend Hopkins, about which he was doubtful to the last, together with influences from Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Laforgue, was guiding English poetry, in his last years, in directions with which he could feel no sympathy. Nor did the poets of the next generations honour him. A few, themselves academic, admired his verse; an occasional lyric in the *Georgian Poetry* volumes echoes it; with Edmund Blunden's work he was perhaps not out of sympathy. But he remained to the last in cloistered isolation, more at home with philologists and spelling reformers than with his fellow poets. It is not too much to claim of him, however, that as a lyrical poet he remains to be rediscovered; a succeeding generation may find his the outstanding poetry published between Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night* (1880) and Yeat's *Green Helmet* volume (1910). The achievements of the nineties is richer in legends and attitudes than in the poetry of conviction; the *Shropshire Lad* is the product of a much less profound and anonymous emotion than Bridges'; the epoch is not a rich one; but in the best of Bridges' lyrics there is a wealth of joy, of memory and the love of downland and valley, which a less pessimistic generation than ours may come to value.

BOOK REVIEWS

HELEN DARBISHIRE: *The Poet Wordsworth: The Clark Lectures*, Trinity College, Cambridge, 1949. *Oxford University Press*, 7s. 6d. net.

These lectures, by one of our greatest Wordsworthian scholars, made a fitting prelude to the poet's centenary celebrations. In choosing her subject, Miss Darbishire refused to be drawn into any side-issues, and concentrated on the best poetry of Wordsworth (i.e. that composed between 1798 and 1808), avoiding all questions of biography which did not contribute to an understanding of the poems. Her method was the admirable one of centering her remarks on a few representative pieces (*The Thorn*, *The Immortality Ode*, *The Prelude*, *The Waggoner*, *The White Doe*), and studying these in considerable detail.

In book form, the lectures will make an excellent introduction to Wordsworth's poetry, for those whose present knowledge of the subject is slight. Such readers could hardly approach the poet under more authoritative guidance. For those with a more than superficial knowledge of Wordsworthian poetry and scholarship, the book will have a different kind of value. They will find in it little that is not familiar — indeed, Miss Darbishire makes no attempt to side-step the obvious when it happens to lie in her path, and informs us unhurriedly that 'this faculty of imagination, the poetic faculty *par excellence* is really the hero, the leading figure, the presiding genius of *The Prelude*'; and that pantheistic passages in the first version of the poem are often omitted, or Christianized, in the last.

It is, in fact, one of the merits of this book that it has no new theory to offer: lovers of 'revaluations', 'reinterpretations', and presentations 'in an entirely new light' must look elsewhere. Novelty appears mainly in points of detailed criticism. Among the most interesting I should list the comparison between the two early poems, *The Vale of Esthwaite* and *An Evening Walk*; the consideration of the recurrent *light* and *flower* images in *The Immortality Ode*; the justification of the title of the *Lyrical Ballads*; the brief excursus on the significance for Wordsworth of the verb *to be* and the preposition *along*; and one supremely apposite quotation from Coleridge's *The Friend*, which makes explicit an idea fundamental to many of the poems, that of 'continuity in self-consciousness'.

Of less importance, but of some interest and amusement-value, is the point about the poet's Cumbrian pronunciation ('blended notes' rhyming perfectly with 'pleasant thoughts'), and the revelation of his tactlessness in the choice of proper names (Martha Ray, in *The Thorn*, deriving her name from the late murdered mother of Wordsworth's intimate friend, Basil Montagu). The shade of Coleridge has long endured pleasantries about the contrast between his projects and his performances: now Wordsworth's turn has come, and Miss Darbishire hits him off with a remark which she denies to be flippant, but which is certainly witty: '... all that was accomplished of the great philosophical poem ... was a *Prelude* to the main theme, and an *Excursion* from it'.

The indefinable attractions of manner and personality which helped to hold a large audience at Cambridge last autumn have happily not deserted these lectures in the austerity of print; and their present publication ensures that the pleasure enjoyed by that original audience will be, at least, 'in wider commonalty spread'.

PAUL TURNER

W. SCHENK: Reginald Pole, Cardinal of England. *Longmans*, 15s. net.

A new life of Cardinal Pole, the man who represented Catholic England in the generation which saw the break with the Papacy, is indeed overdue. According

to his publishers, the late Dr Schenk's brief study was finished before his untimely death, which makes it necessary to judge it solely as it stands. It is a sober account written with impartiality by one whose religion predisposed him in favour of his subject, and in a period overburdened with the brighter aberrations of modern biography and partisanship that is a good deal to be thankful for. But Dr Schenk has barely succeeded in bringing his subject to life, and the supporting figures are, almost without exception, not alive at all. In part this may be due to a peculiarly narrow view of the task of biography: towards the end, for instance, when at last discussing the realities of Pole's thought (the relationship between humanism and Christianity which made up his mind), Dr Schenk shies off with the remark that 'this is an aspect of his life that transcends the realm of the purely biographical', surely an extraordinary and needless act of self-denial. Similarly Pole's registers at Lambeth and Douai are described as of little biographical interest though possibly important to the history of ecclesiastical administration: but is not Pole's work in that sphere part of his life? Failure really to come to grips with Pole's thought either in politics or religion is surprising in a book by the accomplished historian of Puritan thought, and it is a serious matter: there are too many statements about the 'painful conflict' in Pole's mind, without the close analysis of his writings which alone can give reality to the phrase. We are given, as it were, a biographical outline with comment, enlarged by somewhat irrelevant *excursus* into Italian humanism and the poetry of Michelangelo and Vittoria Colonna. There is a useful and illuminating account of Pole's relations with Caraffa, and his spiritual influence on others is well described — the comparison with More seems, on the whole, just. Oddly enough, the book is least satisfactory in its account of Pole's relations with England: no use is made of the cardinal's famous *Apologia* addressed to Charles V in which he gave his own version of his break with Henry VIII, nor of Van Dyke's dissection of that work and its motives written nearly fifty years ago. We hear far too little about the machinations of 1536-39, perhaps because Dr Schenk thought that the political quarrels of a past age are not important (p. 77). The significance of the entry of Pole's fellows, Starkey and Morison, into the royal service, so well brought out by W. G. Zeeveld in his *Foundations of Tudor Policy* (which probably did not reach this country in time for Dr Schenk to use it), seems to have escaped Dr Schenk: altogether he has little appreciation of the intellectual position of the Henrician reformers. Pole's part in the Marian restoration and persecution, though fully admitted, is suggested rather than worked out, and from first to last it is doubtful if Dr Schenk really felt at home in the quicksands of sixteenth-century politics and controversy. This is the most useful and readable brief account available, but it is not that work of thorough and penetrating scholarship which the subject assuredly merits.

G. R. ELTON

FRANCIS DVORNIK: *The Making of Central and Eastern Europe. Polish Research Centre, 25s. net.*

The history of the countries lying on the eastern fringe of the German Reich of the early Middle Ages is too often regarded through German spectacles, and double-lensed spectacles at that: not only have nearly all the modern historians of the period whose work ranks as standard been Germans, but the chroniclers and annalists who supply the material are also, for the most part, German. Thus a book of the kind which Professor Dvornik has set himself to write, which consciously looks at the picture from the other side, was very badly needed, and Professor Dvornik himself, with his gift of tongues and his great erudition, was the obvious man to write it. He has dredged the available ocean for the sources

(with the curious exception of the non-ecclesiastical Hungarian chronicles, the most important of which he has excluded completely) and has applied to his findings the resources of an acute and ingenious mind.

Some of the results which he produces are most interesting and valuable, particularly when he is describing Bohemian history in the tenth century. All his work will be read with interest and a sense of stimulation by the small and select body of fellow workers in the field. At the same time the critic must make considerable reservations before recommending this book to the world as the last word on the subject. The more general reader must understand that its thesis is much more limited than the title would seem to suggest: outside the introductory chapter, which goes into little detail, only tenth-century Poland and Bohemia and certain aspects of the Russian state of the day, are handled at any length. Neither Hungary, Croatia, Serbia nor Bulgaria receives more than superficial treatment. The general reader, incidentally, will probably lose himself every two or three pages in the intricacies of Professor Dvornik's argument. Those who look closer will often feel serious qualms about Professor Dvornik's methods, which all too often draw a series of very far-reaching conclusions from premises which are at best uncertain. To take two or three examples: his entire interpretation of Polish history under Mieszko I rests on a distinctly bold interpretation of a single passage in Thietmar, which is contradicted by many later sources. On p. 179 Professor Dvornik registers with satisfaction that he has been able to establish contact between Kiev and the Empire during the Empress Theophano's regency. The justification for this is a statement in the Chronicle of Nikon that 'ambassadors from Rome came to Vladimir and brought him relics of saints' and about that time the Emperor was in Rome. So that 'if the Embassy did go at all, it must have gone with the knowledge and at the suggestion of the Emperor' (p. 179). On p. 214 Professor Dvornik notes that in A.D. 907 Henry II sent his brother on a mission to his brother-in-law, Stephen of Hungary, and out of this Professor Dvornik constructs a campaign (otherwise unrecorded) by Stephen against Poland — because 'the purpose of this Embassy was probably the conclusion of an alliance between Henry and Stephen against Poland'; 'there being no reason to suppose that the alliance was not implemented, Stephen must have made some military demonstration against Poland'. Professor Dvornik is quite arbitrary in his treatment of his sources: when he likes them he takes their word; when not, he calls them unreliable. And beguiling as is his whole picture of Otto III's *Renovatio Imperii*, it is the result of argument in a circle. He deduces his ideas of the position of Poland, Bohemia and Hungary from his idea of the *renovatio*, and his idea of the *renovatio* from the position which he assigns to Poland, Bohemia and Hungary. In short, nearly all of what he says may be correct, but all too little of it must be correct, leaving his book (so far as its facts go) an unsatisfactory dish, but a most enjoyable stimulant. Its general thesis, that the smaller nations deserve more credit and attention than they have usually received, and the Germans less, is, however, irrefutable; and by stating it so forcibly and so beguilingly, Professor Dvornik has done the world a service.

C. A. MACARTNEY

JOHN H. S. BURLEIGH: *The City of God*. Nisbet, 12s. 6d net

R. H. BARROW: *Introduction to St Augustine. The City of God*. Faber & Faber, 30s. net.

St Augustine, in spite of the work of what has become a long line of distinguished scholars (mostly continental), has suffered and still suffers from being looked at backwards. He is interpreted to us as one of the 'makers of the Middle Ages', with never more than one foot in the world in which he lived. And even

when a genuine attempt is made to understand him in his own world, to understand him historically, the understanding has been too often qualified by misleading distinctions: he is shown as a writer in whom a variety of disparate 'influences' converge; his world appears only as a 'background', text and context, the man and his world, are separated, are, perhaps, related to one another, but are never fully united. The process is familiar. First we form a notion of what belongs to an age, what is characteristic of it, and then, instead of using what appears to be exceptional in order to criticize and extend our notion of the character (and in this manner win a deeper insight into the character of the age), we are content to allow it to remain exceptional. It is a process which has seriously limited our understanding of the Victorian age, and not less seriously misled us in our study of those complicated and overwhelmingly important first four centuries of the Christian era. Even when passions have been laid aside, circumstances, the fact that we have been accustomed to go to those centuries with firmly insulated and narrowly formulated questions, as historians either of Christianity, or of the Roman Empire, or of the late manifestations of Greek or Judaic thought, have made them seem at best a loosely twisted strand of Greek, Hebrew, Roman, Christian 'elements', and their concrete character has been mislaid. And, among much else, the non-historical categories of orthodoxy and heresy have entered in to increase the obscurity. The *Talmud*, for example, is regarded as the product, not of its place and time, reflecting the whole character of this 'Hellenistic' world, but of 'Jewish thought'; and St Augustine is understood as a figure in 'Christian history' against a 'background' of 'classical antiquity'. And yet St Augustine, because of his pre-eminent coherence with his world, offers an unrivalled occasion for a study of the concrete character of that world. However, though in this respect we have still far to go (and a study of the history of these centuries is still the most testing enterprise a scholar can undertake), the situation is far more promising than it was a generation ago; and it may be taken as a sign of progress that in both the books under review a genuine attempt is made to unite text and context and to allow each to modify the other.

Professor Burleigh's book is based upon a set of lectures delivered in Edinburgh in 1944. Its sub-title is, 'A study of St Augustine's philosophy', but its strength is rather descriptive than analytical. It lays before us the circumstances and the world in which the *De Civitate Dei* was composed, the contents of the work and the main stages of its argument. It is scholarly without being severe; sound rather than subtle; it reveals a thorough and up-to-date knowledge of Augustinian scholarship; few of its chapters are without some illuminating observation; as a whole it may be regarded as a reliable introduction and first guide to the study of St Augustine's thought, but a guide that makes, perhaps, too little demand upon those who follow. However, the class of reader who has hitherto depended upon Robertson's chapter in *Regnum Dei* (1901) is now supplied with something which not only reflects the intervening course of Augustinian studies, but embodies also a more just historical perspective. Its predominantly descriptive and historical point of view makes it complementary to Burnaby's more reflective and analytical course of lectures published under the title of *Amor Dei* (1938).

Dr Barrow's enterprise is different. The modesty of the title of his book conceals a work of exact and severe scholarship which will take its place as an original and important contribution to Augustinian studies. It consists, first, of about fifty pages of extracts (including the greater part of Book XIX) from the *De Civitate Dei*, the Latin text and the English translation being printed on opposed pages; secondly, a running commentary on the matter and the manner of these extracts; and thirdly, Appendices and Notes in which bibliographical and other concerns are discussed. The extracts from the text have been chosen and arranged to present the main line of St Augustine's argument and to avoid the many excursions and incidentals which make up the bulk of the work as St Augustine

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wrote it; the commentary is both historical and analytical. In composing the book, Dr Barrow had three purposes in mind: to promote a wider interest in the *De Civitate Dei* by making the main lines of its argument available to those who, though they might be deterred by the bulk of the original work, nevertheless wish for a scholarly understanding of one of the masterpieces of European writing; 'to encourage a wider horizon in the teaching and learning of classics so as to include Christian writers whose debt to classics was great; and to link up once again the study of classics and the study of divinity'; and thirdly, 'to reaffirm the importance of a particular method of study, the method (a) of reading the actual words of an author rather than reading about him, (b) of reading those words in the light of the author's own day and not in the light of interpretations put upon them by later ages'. It is the third of these purposes which I take to be pre-eminently important, and in pursuing it Dr Barrow has made his own original contribution to Augustinian studies.

It has been the unfortunate illusion of some historians to think that something less than a first-class knowledge of the languages involved in their subject of study will serve their purpose, and to think that a minute and exact attention to the words of a text is unnecessary: they believe themselves to be dealing with things, not words. But the study of a text is a study of its words, and no text will reveal its meaning unless the interpreter goes to it with the questions, 'why this word and not that?' and, 'what precisely, in this literary and historical context, is the connotation of this word?' And the whole answer is never supplied by the text itself. And just as historians before now have transformed our knowledge of the course of a battle by a meticulous attention to the exact words used in the sources of information at their disposal, so Dr Barrow has illuminated our understanding of what St Augustine has to say by seeking answers to such questions as, why *civitas* and not *republica*? What precisely does Augustine mean by *iustitia*, *amor*, *pax*? These are historical questions, because though a writer like Augustine takes his liberties with language, liberties which must be examined and pinned down, he is using words which carry with them meanings of the moment, which reflect (particularly when they belong to a political vocabulary) events and situations. So Dr Barrow begins his discursive commentary: 'the first lines of this chapter (Bk I. ch. i) are so important that the phrases are considered one by one', and nothing will deflect him from his analysis. In short, this is not an easy 'introduction' to Augustine, it makes great demands upon the reader, but for anyone who is in earnest with the study of Augustine it is probably the best in our language.

It is impossible to notice here all the points at which Dr Barrow illuminates his subject; one only can be selected for remark — his treatment of the well-known crux in ch. 24 of Bk. XIX. He begins with the proper observation that what St Augustine is offering us is not a 'political philosophy', and he goes on to examine the various explanations (many of them misjudged because they assume that St Augustine has a political philosophy to offer) that have been given of the apparent paradox of St Augustine's denial of *iustitia* to civil societies. His own solution is both simple and subtle and, I think, entirely convincing. It is an explanation which springs from a close attention to what St Augustine actually says and to the context of the statement. At this point, as at many others, Dr Barrow has made a real advance in the interpretation of Augustine's thought.

The shortcomings of the book are mainly philosophical: analysis of the text and historical insight are Dr Barrow's strong points; but every now and again the reader is conscious that the commentary touches what it does not elucidate. One would have liked to find a fuller discussion of what, after all, is the central subtlety of St Augustine's thought — the relation between *iustitia*, *ordo* and *pax*; and perhaps some indication of the relation between *pax* and that most important of contemporary Roman ideas, *auctoritas*. *Pax et Princeps* is more than a mere

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distant background to St Augustine's thought. Now and again, as in the phrase 'Augustinianism at its best' and in the unfortunate and rash suggestion that 'the whole intellectual framework of ancient thought crashed because reason had nothing on which to base itself', an unhistorical note is heard: the crash obscures what should have been a perception of the subtle mediation by which change was taking place. Nor is it enough merely to contrast the point of view of Dante in the *De Monarchia* in respect of the Roman Empire with that of Augustine; in fact the two writers are not talking about the same thing.

Both books have useful bibliographical references, Dr Barrow's naturally fuller than Professor Burleigh's; but I miss from both any mention of F. C. Burkitt's work. He wrote nothing directly on St Augustine, but there would be considerably less light on the period and its problems if we were without the *Religion of the Manichees* and *Church and Gnosis*.

MICHAEL OAKESHOTT

VIKTOR MANN: *Wir waren fünf, Bildnis der Familie Mann*. Südv Verlag, Konstanz, 1949, 26s.

The author of this book was the little-known younger brother of Thomas and Heinrich Mann. Consequently, his autobiography often strikes one as being the raw material out of which grew many of his brothers' novels and short stories. He was as critical of the shortcomings of his people as were his famous brothers. Like them, he draws a straight line from Hohenzollern times to the 'most obstinate and narrow nationalism' of the Third Reich. When in the army under Wilhelm II he learned that it was the main object of German militarism 'to crush all personality and, with the help of icy showers of abuse, mould them into a plastic mass of perfect soldiers'. Thirty years later, when he had to listen to the voice of the Führer which came 'out of the depth of an anonymous inferiority complex', he recognized in it the voice of those Bavarian serjeant-majors 'who, having joined the army as pariahs, after a time became miniature despots and vented their pariah hatred on the sons of bourgeois, peasants and workers alike'. Describing the Munich celebrations on the eve of the new century which he witnessed as a child, he adds: 'In their cradles were sleeping the future inhabitants of the concentration camps and the gauleiters, victims and henchmen.' Under the Nazi régime, he tried to avoid the barbarities, but had always to be prepared for the worst, because his brothers continued to fight National Socialism from abroad. Summing up his impressions after the war he states: 'The deadliest poison of the twelve years is still to be felt everywhere: hatred.' That he belonged to the minority of decent Germans he shows by his readiness to confess: '*Nostra res and nostra culpa, nostra ipsissima culpa.*' This is exactly what Thomas Mann, in his *Doctor Faustus*, wanted his people to realize and confess: 'My sin is greater than could be forgiven me.'

Viktor Mann, in his unassuming way, has a far better understanding of his brothers' achievement than most of their incorrigibly nationalistic German critics who, as he says, used to sum up their criticisms in sentences like these 'One should not deal with one's family — with Richard Wagner — with Goethe — with heaven and biblical characters — with the Devil — in such a manner.' For the Germans like to see Goethe and Wagner idolized, they have no idea of what Thomas Mann's irony really means, and they hate to recognize themselves in the devilish personages of *Doctor Faustus*. And he has a fairer judgment of the accomplishment of his brothers. Of Thomas Mann he says, surveying his main books: 'Behold, the whole world, and his native country in the middle.' About Heinrich Mann: 'Behold, in passion and irony, joy and lament, flaming disgust and love — the whole world, and his native country in the middle.' And here, perhaps, is a reminiscence of what Thomas Mann remarks upon in *Joseph and*

His Brothers; the half-blind Isaac says to Jacob, who pretends to be his brother Esau: 'The voices of brothers are often alike, and words come with the same sounds out of their mouths.'

J. LESSER

HELEN CAM: *England before Elizabeth. Hutchinson's University Library, 7s. 6d. net.*

Dr Cam's little book has every one of those qualities which those who knew her in Cambridge would expect to find in it. It is a miracle of compression, achieved without obvious effort. The broad themes stand out, clearly and emphatically: Saxon unification and Norman order; the growth of common law and local communities; the painful descent of late medieval feudalism into bastard feudalism. Yet this compression, this emphasis on the major developments does not lead to a series of generalities; indeed, one of Dr Cam's happiest gifts is her ability to illumine the general by reference to the particular. There is, for example, the little study of Alfred the Great; it is not only the best thing in the book, but also a telling summary of the objectives of Anglo-Saxon monarchy at its best. There is also the illustration of the untechnical sense in which the word parliament was used in the thirteenth century. 'Louis IX of France', we are told, 'and his newly married wife used to hold parliament together secretly on a back stair of the royal palace to escape the jealous vigilance of his mother.' There are throughout many quotations from contemporary sources, and above all from contemporary poetry, giving us quick, vivid glimpses of the Middle Ages through medieval eyes. But all this, let it be reiterated, is what we would have expected from Dr Cam. In these few pages she has epitomized the political, constitu-

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tional and social growth of medieval England. We may miss, perhaps, some facets of the purely economic scene; we may even venture a few questions on points of detail — did Glanville write the treatise that bears his name, did John rejoice at Hubert Walter's death, were reserves of wealth accumulated in the later Middle Ages? Whatever the answer to such questions, however, the important thing is that those seeking an introduction to the English Middle Ages in future will be able to turn to this little book as well as to that older classic, Sir Maurice Powicke's *Medieval England*.

EDWARD MILLER

G. MONTAGU HARRIS: *Comparative Local Government*. *Hutchinson's University Library*, 7s. 6d.

There is a real need for a good and not too large book on comparative local government. It would be much easier to write a very large book on this subject than a small one, and the larger the book the safer the author would be from criticism. A small book means that the author has to select his material with care and he has got to get at the essence of institutions instead of giving his reader material for doing it for himself. The outlook for getting a good book may have seemed fair: enterprising publishers running a series of books eminently suitable, and for author Mr Montagu Harris who was President of the International Union of Local Authorities from 1936 to 1948 and whose knowledge of the subject is unrivalled. The result is a book packed with information. Topics are taken one after another and some account is given of the practice in most countries. The material is so condensed that it is often hard to follow, and there is quite a chance that a student may end up with some odd ideas. On the other hand the author could be criticized for leaving out too much. Local government is part of government in general and it cannot be studied in isolation from other parts of governmental structure. Thus for studying German local government it is important to understand the part played by the *Regierungsbezirk* which is an institution of central and not of local government. But I would rather give the author sympathy than criticism. I doubt whether anyone could produce a really good book without having taught the subject. By teaching one can learn experimentally how a subject should be presented, what are the difficulties and what matters should be stressed. But where and to whom is it to be taught? We can hardly find time in our universities to teach the English system of local government. In Cambridge we now have a public law section of the post-graduate course for the LL.B. degree, but there is no time for substantial study of comparative local government. Mr Montagu Harris may not have written a particularly inspiring book, but he has done more than anyone else in this country to keep alive an interest in other systems of local government.

R. M. JACKSON

BOOKS RECEIVED

The inclusion of any book in this list does not preclude its review in a later issue.

S. G. F. BRADDON: *Time and Mankind*. *Hutchinson*, 18s. *net*.

SIDNEY S. CAMPBELL: *Music in the Church*. *Dobson*, 4s. 6d. *net*.

VALENTINA CAPOCCI: *Genio e Mestiere, Shakespeare e la Commedia dell'Arte*. *Laterza & Figli*, 440 *lire*.

CLIFFORD T. CHAPMAN: *The Conflict of the Kingdoms*. *Hutchinson's University Library*, 7s. 6d. *net*.

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